

Earth invasion proceeds on schedule; *Alien Resurrection* slightly delayed.

BY ED FLIXMAN

PRODUCER DEAN DEVLIN RECENTLY BLITZED the New York City press corps, aiming to stir up the buzz around *Independence Day*, his latest collaboration with director Roland Emmerich (the same team brought you *Stargate*). Devlin came armed with a very impressive eight-minute product reel, boasting some incredible footage of wholesale destruction wrought by alien visitors — much of it now visible in

theatrical trailers touting the July 3 opening of the film. “The July 3rd opening was part of our conception from the very beginning,” says Devlin, “and everyone else seems to have stood clear of that date, so it worked out very well.”



The White House is destroyed with the aid of special effects used on a Trendmaster toy in *Independence Day*. BELOW: Scientists investigate a captured alien craft.

Judging from the preview, this film will be the one to rule the summer. Although driven by extensive special effects (Devlin says some 400 effects shots are in the film, averaging six film elements per shot), the preview suggests that Will Smith's likeable performance as a wise-cracking, reluctant hero provides the epic with a strong human dimension.

The Sci-Fi Channel plans a documentary with the backstage scoop in *The Making of Independence Day* to air in July.

Devlin had just seen prototypes of some of the toys Trendmasters will be rolling out with the film's release, and couldn't contain his boyish excitement. “They've got this model of an alien that's sound-activated — come near it and it jumps at you,” he chuckled. He was particularly thrilled with the “slightly subversive” idea of a toy

White House that blows apart.

The same toy company currently is cleaning up with a line of Godzilla models, despite the absence of the long-promised big-budget Tristar *Godzilla*. That may be remedied soon, as Devlin and Emmerich still hope to make it their next picture, though Tristar is once again dragging its feet over the budget issue. Of course, if *Independence Day* tears up the screens to the extent expected, Tristar may end up paying more for the services of the producer-director team than it would have if it had made the deal on first approach.

Trendmasters is covering all bets, as it has also licensed *Mars Attacks!*, Tim Burton's invasion epic, planned for a Christmas release (though it could be delayed to summer 1997). It's rumored that Tim Burton freaked a bit when he saw the destruction of the White House in the *ID4* [*Independence Day*] trailer; since the destruction of Washington is one of the coolest cards in the Topps card deck, Burton is pretty much obligated to include a similar scene. It could be a matter of pride for both Burton and Industrial Light & Magic to find a way to trump that one.

Overall, the competition seems to be a healthy one that will be good for both films — certainly, if *ID4* delivers all it promises, by year's end audiences should be eager for Burton's very different take on the identical premise. Which one fans prefer will be a matter of taste; do you want scary aliens, or goofy-lookin' aliens? The relationship of the two films is startlingly similar to that of two nuclear armageddon films, the convincingly real drama *Fail-Safe* and the surreal satire *Dr. Strangelove*, both big box-office winners of 1966.

And, just as *Dr. Strangelove* boasted Peter Sellers in multiple roles, Jack Nicholson will be seen in *Mars Attacks!* as U.S. President James Dale and Las Vegas real-

estate hustler Art Land. Nicholson was originally approached for the presidential role alone, but the price demanded was a budget-breaker. The two-for-one deal was an inspired compromise that offers Nicholson a unique challenge, and audiences the opportunity to see the popular actor create two very different roles in one film.

Filling out the First Family are Glenn Close as Marsha Dale, and



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Natalie Portman (*The Professional*) as their White House-rebel daughter. Presidential advisers include Pierce Brosnan as a scientist longing to study the Martians and their ways, Rod Steiger as the nuke-happy General Decker, and Paul Winfield as peace-loving General Casey.

Also in the cast are Lukas Haas (*Witness*) as Richie, a doughnut-shop manager who comes in first contact with the invaders as they touch down in Perkinsville, Kansas. Sara Jessica Parker plays Nathalie, an MTV reporter whose assignment on the story allows us to follow her as she follows the nation-hopping Martians. Among other notables in the cast are action-film veterans Jim Brown and Pam Grier as a retired boxer and his ex-wife, and singer Tom Jones as himself.

Despite the conviction of some who feel that there should be no sequel to *The Crow* without Brandon Lee, Tim O'Barry, who created the character (and developed a close friendship with Lee just prior to his death), has contended all along that Alex Draven was not the only one to be transformed by the dark avenging spirit. *Crow 2: City of Angels* looks like it is shaping up as a worthy successor to 1994's gloomy gothic hit; certainly the advance footage we've seen, set in the sodium-yellow-tint mean streets of the Los Angeles barrio, suggest a film as moody as Alex Proyas's vision of Detroit, while remaining distinctively different.

The story, picking up seven years after the

events of the first film — and therefore set just a bit into the future — is again narrated by Sarah, now a young woman, played by Mia Kirshner. Sarah runs a tattoo shop with her boyfriend Ashe Corvin (Vincent Perez), and his young son. When Ashe and the boy witness a murder, they too are killed. Visited by the Crow, Ashe has the opportunity to avenge the murder of his boy — and to protect Sarah from becoming another victim.

While many of the plot elements are identical to the first film, director Tim Pope says that this one will give greater stress to the emotional content — meaning the love across the boundaries of death that entwines his two stars. Both actors are poised to become national heartthrobs in the aftermath of the film's release; Kirshner's performances in *Love and Human Remains* and *Exotica* have certainly laid the groundwork for her future stardom, while Perez is already the most lusted-after young male in France, thanks to his roles in such films as *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *Queen Margot*.

Two months ago, George Clooney was going to star in *The Green Hornet*, Val Kilmer in *Batman and Robin*, and the title role of *The Saint* was still uncanceled. After a quick round of musical chairs, George Clooney is Batman, Val Kilmer is the Saint, and nobody is the Green Hornet. Batman director Joel Schumacher was sufficiently peeved by the shenanigans that he left the roster of the Creative Artists Agency, which also handles

Kilmer's career. Kim Basinger, who was sued into bankruptcy for refusing to appear in the film *Boxing Helena* because the script was so achingly bad, must be wondering how these guys get away with it.

Weirdly enough, Sylvester Stallone — who grabbed headlines with his recent claim that he will make no more action films — also quit his agency, International Creative Management, over the casting of *Batman and Robin*, according to trade paper reports. Sly, they say, was upset that the agency didn't get him the role of the villainous Mr. Freeze, which was offered to ICM client Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Danny Boyle, the young British director of *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*, showed considerable gumption in walking away from *Alien Resurrection*, the fourth film in Fox's *Alien* series, which — as we warned you last issue — makes an action-hero team out of Sigourney Weaver and Winona Rider. Boyle turned down the \$850,000 payday in order to make *A Life Less Ordinary*, which will complete Boyle's trilogy of films about how money can mess up your life. *Trainspotting*, currently a sensation in Britain, opens in the United States this June.

Which leaves *Alien Resurrection*, which was supposed to start shooting right around now, in search of a director. And the search may take a while; few established filmmakers are likely to jump at the chance to direct a sequel when the script, the design, and much of the

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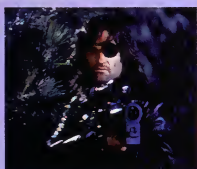
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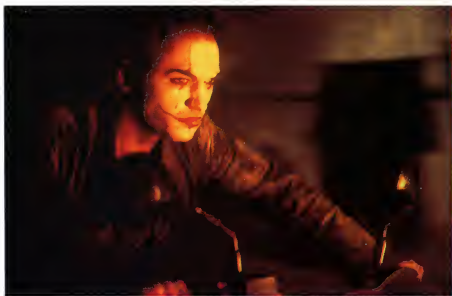
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Principal photography recently wrapped on John Carpenter's *Escape From L.A.*, sequel to the sci-fi classic *Escape from New York*. Kurt Russell (above) returns as "Snake," who finds himself in Los Angeles after an earthquake has left the city an island, inhabited by warring gangs and other lethal outcasts. Other cast members include Steve Buscemi, Bruce Campbell, Stacy Keach, Peter Fonda, Pam Grier, and Cliff Robertson. A late summer or early fall release is planned.

principal cast, are already set in stone. And newcomers with Boyle's level of talent are hard to find.

Bryan Singer (*The Usual Suspects*) is another acclaimed young director. He's in preproduction with a Stephen King property, *Apt Pupil*, in which Ian McKellan will play an aging Nazi war criminal living anonymously



French film star Vincent Perez plays Ashe Corvin, murdered and then resurrected to avenge the killing of his son in *Crow 2: City of Angels*.

in an American suburb. The King novella is from the *Different Seasons* collection, also the source for *Dolores Claiborne* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. Singer is also committed to *Hardwired*, a dark comedy about a detective seeking a cybernetic murderer.

Warner Brothers Television is preparing a 90-minute, prime-time, animated special to mark the debut of its animated *Superman* television series, to air in late summer. Tim

Daly will be giving voice to the title character, opposite Dana Delany as Lois Lane. This news arrived at our office the same week that Superman creator Jerry Siegel succumbed to a heart attack, at the age of 81. Siegel and Joseph Shuster (who died in 1992) invented the Kryptonian as teens in 1934, though the comic didn't see print until 1938.

Marvel Comics began the year with a major shakeup, laying off more than 200

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employees, and shifting the production of some of its most important titles to Wildcat Studios/Image Comics. Under the deal, Jim Lee will be directly involved in *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*, while Rob Liefeld will handle *Captain America* and *The Avengers*.

More recently, Marvel and Paramount Pictures announced the introduction of a joint publishing venture. The first product from the collaboration will be a *Mission Impossible* comic book series, following the exploits of Ethan Hunt, the character played by Tom Cruise in the forthcoming *Brian De Palma* film. Marvel says the new company will have editorial offices in Los Angeles as well as New York, and will develop original characters and concepts as well as tie-ins to Paramount's film and TV properties. Of course, *Star Trek* comics, in various flavors, are expected to be a mainstay of the new outfit.

Speaking of flavors, Paramount has also entered a partnership with Rusty Pelican Restaurants, Inc., with plans to build 23 Bubba Gump Shrimp Company restaurants in the next three to five years. And, speaking of Gump, we jumped the gun when we reported that Robert Zemeckis was to film an adaptation of Carl Sagan's *Contact*. Zemeckis is still carefully considering his options; *Contact* is one of them.

Director George Miller, who was originally set to direct *Contact*, is said to be making plans for a fourth *Mad Max*—plans for a *Road Warrior* TV series have been back-burnered in the

Fans of the two previous *Beastmaster* films, starring Marc Singer, will be happy to learn that a new movie has recently completed production. The made-for-television film is set to premiere in national syndication the week of May 13 (check your local listings) as part of MCA Television's "Action Pack."

In *Beastmaster III: The Eye of Braxus*, Marc Singer returns as Dar the Beastmaster, alone and still wandering the mystical distant past. After rescuing a family attacked by thieves, he takes up their cause to free their homeland from the evil sorcerer Lord Agon. In his quest he again uses his powers to command various wild animals, including Rah the lion, Sherak the hawk, and ferrets Kodo and Podo. Lesley-Anne Down, as the good witch Morgana, comes to



Dar's aid when he descends deep into Argon's stronghold. Tune in for the final showdown between Dar and his beasts, and a host of evil gods released by the "Eye of Braxus."

feature's favor. The film, we're told, will introduce characters and concepts that will serve as a bridge between the original trilogy of films and the planned TV show.

Have you had enough Jackie Chan yet? Miramax Films will be giving Chan's classics, *Drunken Master II* and *Crime Story*, their

first wide release in the United States soon—perhaps by the time you read this. And New Line will follow up its Chan hit *Rumble in the Bronx* with the latest Chan epic *Thunderbolt*. Chan has worked in more than a hundred films, and starred in more than forty, so there's lots more where that came from. □



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Europe and U.S. Programming News, plus the Ultimate Sci-Fi Trivia Game on CD-ROM!

BY KIMBERLY HEMPHILL

THE ULTIMATE DIVERSION FOR SCIENCE FICTION FANS arrives in June! "The Sci-Fi Channel Trivia Game" on CD-ROM contains over 5,000 questions that will test the mettle of the most fanatical sci-fi, fantasy, and horror enthusiasts. Questions are drawn from movies, television, books, comics, and a special "wormhole" section of miscellaneous topics. Morphix, a three-dimensional animated host, oversees the

proceedings, and the questions get more and more difficult as the game progresses. You can play against the computer, or compete against a friend. The CD-ROM features thousands of images from the various categories, and offers a direct link to The Domin-

gramming News: James Cameron hosts a special four-hour director's cut of *The Abyss*, as the Sci-Fi Channel in the U.S. dives into summer. This unique version will be shown in letter-box format, and features a different ending than the theatrical release. The film chronicles the efforts of a crew of salvage divers attempting to rescue a nuclear submarine, and their run-in with a group of Navy Seals on a secret mission. This premiere event airs in the U.S. Saturday, May 4, at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m.

A treat is in store for fans of the *Twilight Zone*. Back in the 1960s, certain episodes of the second season were shot on videotape in an effort to save money. These rarely seen shows will be aired the week of May 20 in the U.S., at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. "Radio is a world that has to be believed to be seen." This line is spoken by Dean Jagger in "Static," a story about a man who can tune in programs from the past on his old radio. It airs in the U.S. May 20.

Suppose you were compelled to tell the truth — all the time. And suppose you were a used car dealer. That's the premise of "The Whole Truth," written by Rod Serling and airing May 21 in the U.S. Billy Mumy made the first of his three *Twilight Zone* appearances in "Long Distance Call," playing a child who has been given a toy telephone by his recently deceased grandmother. Guess who he calls? This episode airs in the U.S. May 22.

A dream is more than a dream in "Twenty-Two," also written by Serling. A hospitalized dancer is troubled by a recurring vision that eventually has a big impact on her life. Jonathan Harris of *Lost in Space* fame plays the role of a doctor. It airs May 23. It's Christmas in May with an airing of a videotaped holiday episode of the *Twilight Zone*. "Night of the Meek" stars Art Carney as a down-on-his-luck drinker who gets a chance at redemption. This magical episode was written by Serling, and airs May 24.

The Sci-Fi Channel in the U.S. has an unusual sequence of films planned for **Anatomically Incorrect**

Continued on page 76



Alien contact is made with a floating water sculpture in James Cameron's *The Abyss*, airing in letterbox format on The Sci-Fi Channel (U.S.). **RIGHT:** Try your sci-fi trivia skill with the Channel's CD ROM Trivia Game.

ion, the Sci-Fi Channel's site on the World Wide Web.

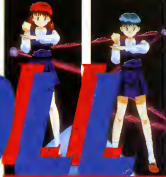
Sci-Fi Channel Europe Programming News: Fans in Europe should prepare for Alien Invasion Week from May 6 through May 10 at 20:00 p.m. and 02:00 a.m. daily. *Invaders from Mars* touch down first, followed by *The U.F.O. Incident*, *War of the Worlds* and *Invasion Earth*. An uncut version of *The Terror from Beyond Space* rounds out the week. European viewers can catch the *Alien Autopsy: Fact or Fiction?* and decide for themselves on May 15 at 19:00. *Quatermass* fans have a treat in store, too. Episodes of the series will air May 27 and 28 at 20:00, followed by *The Quatermass Experiment* on the 29th and *Quatermass II* on the 30th, both also at 20:00.

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From brain enhancement to brain damage; SF films at the frontier of the mind.

BY STEVEN PUCHALSKI

HUMANKIND HAS ALWAYS BEEN intrigued with the idea of the mind's shifting relationship with reality. And given the possibilities of the theme, it's no surprise that the science fiction genre is a frequent vehicle for such explorations.

Whether in the written work of Michael Moorcock and Philip K. Dick, or in the films presented here, stories based upon the same, fairly simple concept are often as unique

as the imaginations of their creators, with some grounded in rock-solid logic, while others twist in their own fantastic, hallucinatory breezes. In all of the cases, they give moviegoers insight into an unrealized, heightened awareness — with results that can range anywhere

advances in technology to their shocking (yet all-too-believable) extremes.

Los Angeles during the final days of 1999 is an urban pressure cooker, ready to blow. And considering the sad shape society is in, you can understand why anyone would be searching for a way to escape. That's the job of Ralph Fiennes as Lenny Nero, an ex-cop who now makes a living dealing in the latest technological drug. His stock in trade is virtual reality SQUID discs ("Superconducting Quantum Interference Device"), which tap directly into the cerebral cortex, allowing users to "jack in" to pre-recorded experiences. Of course, taking America's love for titillation to its logical conclusion, Nero's black-market discs allow his clientele to indulge in sex and violence without any legal (or marital) repercussions. Unfortunately, this "Santa Claus of the subconscious" gets in over his head when a pair of "snuff" discs fall into his hands — the first, the murder of a black activist at the hands of the cops; and the second, a sadistic rape and murder. Meanwhile, the entire city is ready to ignite into a race riot on New Year's Eve.

Fiennes is wonderfully disheveled in the lead, providing him with a severe change of image after *Quiz Show* and *Schindler's List*, and the supporting cast, including Richard Edson, Michael Wincott, and Tom Sizemore, is equally adept at skirting respectability. Without question, the most energetic performance comes from Angela Bassett, who rips loose in her (sadly underdeveloped) role as a bodyguard named Mace — who, following in the wake of Sarah Connor and Ripley, continues co-scripter James Cameron's fondness for kick-ass action heroines. The weak link is Juliette Lewis, miscast as Faith, Nero's ex-girlfriend, now a scrawny rock star with a penchant for see-thru attire. As written, the role demands a smoldering presence; instead, we get Lewis once again rummaging through her limited grab bag of mannerisms, while making Nero's continued obsession with



William Hurt tries to help his wife Blair Brown as she transforms in *Altered States*. RIGHT: Angela Bassett is bodyguard to techno-druggie Ralph Fiennes in the futuristic thriller *Strange Days*.

from cheap thrills, enlightenment, or simple, overwhelming confusion thanks to the wonders of modern technology.

Strange Days (Fox Video) gives us an apocalyptic vision of the not-so-distant future and, despite its flaws, remains one of last year's most riveting science fiction releases. And although its theatrical release was disastrous and brief — largely thanks to an ill-conceived ad campaign — the video release will give you a second chance to experience one of the most shattering visions of futuristic chaos since *Blade Runner*; a non-stop assault on the senses that takes the latest



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ABOVE: In Douglas Trumbull's *Brainstorm* it's a headset, not a drug that creates sensory transference. BELOW: William Hurt gets more than he bargained for as he genetically regresses to a primal life form in *Altered States*.

this off-key MTV-wannabee inexplicable.

Although criticized by some for its brutality, everyone can agree that this film hits the ground running, with director Kathryn Bigelow (*Near Dark*, *Blue Steel*) unleashing the gale force of her kinetic skills. Yet, despite its high style and thought-provoking premise, it's a shame that James Cameron and Jay Cocks' script dissolves into a puddle of clichés and an unconvincing resolution to this bedlam, which reduces the SQUID discs into no more than a plot device for a traditional thriller.

Oddly enough, given the script's very negative take on this lurid technology, the virtual reality point-of-view scenes are among the most compelling, including the nerve-jangling rooftop chase that jump-starts the movie. Despite its problems, for adventurous filmgoers this is an unsettling and explosive joyride into a future that's often too close for comfort.

If the virtual reality technology of *Strange Days* seems oddly familiar, it may be because a similar experience-transferral device was used over a dozen years ago in Douglas Trumbull's *Brainstorm* (MGM/UA Home Video). While *Days* uses the idea as a gimmick within its complex story line, director Trumbull (best known for his special effects contributions to *2001* and *CE3K*) shoves it into the center ring. Unfortunately, the patchwork script also attempts to squeeze in all the requisite melodrama of a prime-time soap opera. As a result, the movie goes limp the moment they move the cameras out of the lab.

Christopher Walken (before becoming the prototype for screen psychos of the '90s) stars as a brilliant scientist who has developed a revolutionary new form of human communication—namely a headset that not only puts the user in the middle of others' experiences, but allows us them to taste, smell, and even feel

joy or pain. And mirroring real-life technological advances, while *Strange Days* presented experiences on mini-CDs, this 1983 production has them stored on bulky, reel-to-reel tapes (personally, I think they missed the boat by not putting them on 8-tracks). Of course, things begin to go awry when the big bosses get wind of their breakthrough and the military decides it wants to redesign it into a weapon.

The script takes on a more metaphysical edge thanks to a tape recorded at the moment of death. But in the long run, it glosses over the material's true potential—watering it down with a schmarmy love story, incongruous comic relief (an automated factory goes haywire, complete with overflowing soap suds and patrolling guards), and yet another corporate conspiracy. It's also surprising that a film about sensory enhancement would have such an unimaginative look, complete with muted production design that has all the warmth of sitting on plastic-wrapped furniture. Let's not forget the laughably pretentious effects-laden climax that leaves less of an impact on the viewers' sense of wonder than on their sense of humor.

Meanwhile, the cast can do little but stumble through their ill-defined characters, including Louise Fletcher co-starring as Walken's chain-smoking partner, Cliff Robertson as the slimy corporate head, and Natalie Wood as Walken's long-suffering wife. Even the usually engrossing Walken is kept under restraint; amidst all the hardware and techno-babble, the film's most unbelievable piece of science fiction is the simple act of watching Walken play a happy, normal family man.

Moving from sensory awareness to sensory deprivation, we find a more extreme transformation of one's perception of reality in Ken Russell's *Altered States* (Warner). But in this case, instead of tapping into day-old

Continued on page 27



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Bjo has written articles and columns for *Starlog*, *Galaxy*, *Future Life*, *Mother Earth*, *Starburst*, and the *Official Star Trek Fan Club* magazine. With foster daughter, Jennifer, Bjo is science fiction and fantasy co-manager on the new Microsoft Network.

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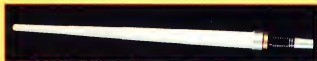
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THE X-FILES

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memories or providing cheap thrills, we're given a character with the larger aspirations of unlocking lost avenues of the mind.

In his first film role, William Hurt stars as Eddie Jessup, a college researcher experimenting with isolation tanks and the effects of sensory deprivation on the brain. Things get wilder after an enlightening trip to Mexico, when Jessup returns with a "sacred psychedelic used by Indian tribes to 'evoke old memories' — by working directly on the nucleus of the brain cells. Using himself as a guinea pig, Jessup takes the chemical while in isolation, with the hope of uncovering mankind's greater truths, which he is convinced still linger in our genes.

After experiencing visions of the dawn of mankind, Jessup realizes that his physical self has begun to externalize his hallucinations, with his genetic structure slowly regressing to a primal state. Despite concern from his colleagues and wife (Blair Brown), he continues his unorthodox experiments, and the film takes an absurd twist when Jessup suddenly turns into a full-scale apeman and goes on the prowl. After that, the only questions remaining are, How much deeper into the evolutionary gene pool can he go? And can it possibly get any goofier?

Based on a novel by award-winning playwright Paddy Chayefsky (who also scripted, but insisted on the pseudonym Sidney Aaron after seeing the film), the screenplay is crammed to the brim with family traumas,

religious delusions, and a love story that transcends the boundaries of science. Broken down to its essentials, this Faustian, science-gone-wrong tale might sound like nothing more than a reworking of *Monster on the Campus*, albeit garnished with explosive visuals.

Not so. Because even when the final third becomes mired in corny plot twists, it still packs a considerable wallop, thanks in large part to fascinating, intelligent characters who, in the pursuit of larger secrets, have lost the perspective on the smaller (more tangible) things in life. And although Russell has never been known for his cinematic restraint, in this case Chayefsky's (relative) coherence keeps Ken's extreme visuals in perspective. This odd but potent teaming makes for one of the most outrageous, obsessive, nutty, professor tales of all time.

Looking for even edgier fare? Well, David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (MCA Universal) takes the alteration of one's reality to audacious new heights. As expected from the director of *Dead Ringers* and *Naked Lunch*, his story revels in disturbing imagery, while placing it all within a larger, sociological context. Furthermore, in this instance the changes are happening to an unwilling participant who, though far from an innocent, is still a victim of twisted technology.

James Woods stars as Max Renn, the sleazy operator of Channel 83, a television station that specializes in bizarre sex and violence. Always in search of tougher acquisitions,

Renn gets what he asks for in a show entitled *Videodrome* — a pirated satellite transmission consisting of nothing but nonstop torture, murder, and mutilation. Yet this is just the tip of a larger, more insidious conspiracy, which plans to attack the moral bankruptcy of the modern world and slice it away like a cancer. You see, *Videodrome* is actually a catalyst for a different level of reality, since prolonged viewing induces a brain tumor that not only changes your point of view, but (as in *Altered States*) can eventually seep over into radical mutations of your entire body.

Soon Renn's world begins to take on a whole new shape. First, a videotape literally comes to life in his hands, his TV set begins to pulsate, and most distressing are the organic changes, like when Max's abdomen develops a throbbing, vaginal slot large enough to shove his entire hand into. From then on, Renn is turned into a pawn and a puppet assassin as he's ping-ponged between factions vying for a new social order. Meanwhile, the fragmented structure pulls us in so deep that even the viewer loses track of where reality and "video hallucination" diverge.

On top of that, Cronenberg laces this engrossing sci-fi thriller with jabs at today's cathode ray-addicted culture, while continuing his long-running obsession with the modification of the human mind and body. The story line also avoids formulaic structure and genre expectations in favor of mind-blowing

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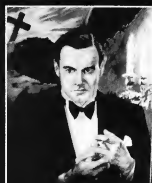


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imagery backed up with enough socio-political subtext to fill a college thesis. Even the casting is perfect, with Woods bringing a believability to even the most whacked-out conceits, and ex-Blondie singer Debbie Harry playing an early victim of this subversive new technology, which offers proof that indeed the medium is the message.

Finally, after all these heavy explorations of sensory enhancement, we take a change of pace with *Brain Damage* (Paramount); without question, the funniest movie ever made featuring a talking brain parasite. The man behind its success is grindhouse auteur Frank Henenlotter (*Basket Case 1* through 3), who works his low-budget into a startling melange of imagination and grisly humor. Although far from family fare, it pulls no punches and is a real treat for fans of hardcore, laff-a-minute dementia.

Rick Herbst stars as Brian, an average guy who has his life turned inside out when he meets "Elmer" — actually a legendary beast known as the Aylmer, a repulsive, foot-long critter with a face that only a monster-movie addict could love (and a voice courtesy of legendary horror host Zacherle) — who escapes from its elderly keepers' bathtub and takes up residence in Brian's bedroom. Brian's normal New York City lifestyle is rocked the instant Elmer injects a blue "juice" into his brain (via a handy hole in the back of the poor guy's neck) and gives him a taste of heightened, chemically induced urban reality, during which even an ordinary junkyard looks like Oz. Of course, while Brian stumbles through his new-found euphoria, he doesn't realize that Aylmer's favorite pastime is munching on fresh human brains with his oversized mouthful of razor-sharp teeth. Even Brian's girlfriend can't convince him to change his self-destructive path, because as we all know, there are no better friends than a boy and his parasite.

The special effects are cut-rate but surprisingly ingenious, and Henenlotter certainly knows how to get a sick laugh out of having your brain sucked out.

Meanwhile, Herbst makes a convincing innocent who finds himself addicted to his new consciousness, while being manipulated by a creature who comes complete with a grim sense of humor and a terrific singing voice. Oddly enough, these comically gruesome misadventures of Brian 'n' Aylmer follow the same structure as any old "Just say no!" anti-drug flick, especially when Brian's friends worry about his sudden change in personality, when he moves to a sub-welfare hotel, and particularly during his cold turkey withdrawal.

Although a total gross-out from start to finish, this creepy little gem is always mellowed by comic relief (like the Aylmer burping after a brain snack), along with appropriately grimy urban locales and penny-ante, brain-expanding psychedelia. The end result is a truly inventive cult item that still hasn't found its deserved audience or acclaim. □

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OF THE COAST

A new breed of computing devices offers low-cost Internet access — and, just maybe, a revolution.

BY MELISSA J. PERENSON

OK, ADMIT IT. YOUR CURIOSITY HAS BEEN PIQUED. The incessant buzz comes at you from every which way — be it another newspaper headline or another Web URL address on the radio, TV, or even on the Sci-Fi Channel. Everywhere you turn, you hear about the Internet. There's just no escaping it.

But, you're thinking, you really don't want to invest \$2,000 in a fully equipped PC. Perhaps

you consider yourself all thumbs when it comes to computers; and you're not really looking to spend the time or the money on a computer that is far more powerful than you need. Plus, you know whatever you purchase will be obsolete, so the joke goes, before you even get it out of the box.

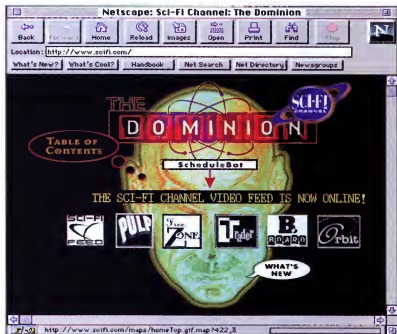
That's where the Internet appliance comes in. Alternately referred to as "Internet PCs" or "Network Computer," the general concept is still the same: an affordable computer designed specifically to facilitate access to the Internet. These so-called Internet appliances have been causing quite a stir at such major computer industry trade shows as last November's Fall Comdex and January's Winter Consumer Electronics Show.

At its foundation, the Internet appliance is a solid idea; after all, you wouldn't consider buying an oven just to make toast. But many opponents to the idea consider Internet appliances to be a step backward. These critics suggest that the Internet appliance is just a fancy name for a "dumb terminal"

— a terminal accessing a centralized network where all data is stored, and all the computing power is parceled out, harkening back to an older and less efficient era of computing. But the creators and defenders of the appliance concept deny that it is in any way a retreat to the past, and contend that it could actually open up the door to an entirely different way of computing.

Opponents to Internet appliances argue, Why download information only to have to store it on a remote network, and be unable to use that information without a network? It's less efficient and convenient than downloading data to your hard-disk drive.

Then again, there are actually several very successful services based upon that model. When you call into America Online or CompuServe, you're calling into a proprietary network that is storing information which you can browse through and retrieve. And when you

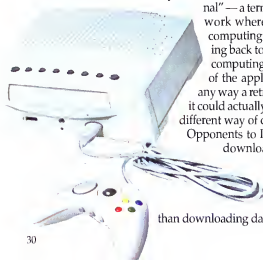


access your E-mail you're accessing E-mail that's stored on either AOL's or CompuServe's networks.

The Internet appliance refines this concept, by applying the wide range of standard protocols that have developed to allow computers of very different designs to interpret the same content on the World Wide Web. The goal is to bring Web surfing, which for all the hype is still only available to a relatively small percentage of the population, into more homes and even businesses by undercutting the PC price barriers. The magic price-point most often quoted is \$500, although it remains to be seen whether any of the Internet appliances in development will actually come in near that figure.

The idea of low-cost PCs for Internet use is actually not so new. In January, the old Commodore Amiga computer was revived by Amiga Technologies, now a Ger-

When appliances like the Apple Power Player (below) hit the market, affordable access to the Internet should create continued growth for popular sites like the Sci-Fi Channel's own "Dominion."



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man-owned subsidiary of Escom AG. The \$720 Amiga Surfer, now available in Europe and planned for release this spring in the United States, is a spruced-up incarnation of the Amiga 1200, featuring 2MB of RAM, a 260-MB hard disk, a 14.4-Kbps modem, and a new Web browser designed for the Amiga. Although priced higher than the fabled \$500 Internet box, the Amiga system represents a compromise between the bare-bones, distributed model offered by the other companies and a full-fledged PC. The Amiga works with your TV, and comes with a word processor, spreadsheet, and database.

In Japan, Bandai Digital Entertainment's Pippin Atmark player utilizes Apple's Pippin technology — originally developed to bring Apple into the game market — and works with any Web browser that's Power PC-compatible. The player includes a CD-ROM drive, modem, and an attachable floppy drive, but there's no local hard disk. It is packaged with four software titles and will be marketed both as a stand-alone device and as a Macintosh peripheral. The U.S. release is planned for May, with the price hovering at about \$600.

ViewCall America has developed WEBSTER, a proprietary set-top box that acts as an Internet browser capable of handling graphics, text, forms, and audio (although not RealAudio or video; Java and Shockwave support is planned for later versions). The device, which is estimated at \$300, plus a monthly user fee, is expected to be available by this summer.

Right now, the concept of Internet appliances is in its infancy, and it's anyone's guess which of the divergent corporate visions for these devices will win out. Oracle, IBM, Wyse, Sun Microsystems, Compaq, Olivetti, and Apple are all in the hunt for creating a standard. Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle Corp., a software company that specializes in networked computing, was the first to raise the idea of an Internet appliance. IBM's chairman Lou Gerstner coined the term "interpersonal computer" and drafted a plan where you would use IBM's IPC to access global networks, Windows-operating system-based information, and upload data to the networks; Gerstner says to expect an IPC by fall 1996.

Supercomputing giant Sun Microsystems has suggested a different angle, such that

you would simply retrieve software applications from the server, in some cases under a rental basis. Sun has the added advantage of owning Java, an Internet programming language that's all the rage now that Netscape 2.0 with Java support has been released.

Not everyone is thrilled by the prospect of Internet appliances. There's concern about the accessibility of data that must be downloaded from a server, and there's concern about the speed with which data can be accessed, particularly considering the widespread problem of slow communications links. If the speed issue can be overcome, which is highly questionable, an advantage could lie in the flexi-



bility of using a networked client where the operating system and applications are provided by the network and remain resident in memory until you turn off the system. Think about it: You'll never have to worry about installing a software upgrade again.

The Internet appliances planned by IBM, Oracle, and others are expected to be powered by Intel Pentium, PowerPC, or MIPS processors. The general idea for these network client-based appliances is to equip the device with a fast 32-bit CPU, 8 MB of RAM, and no disk drive. Oracle's Network Computer will be able to plug directly into your TV without showing any degradation of quality, thanks to the use of high-definition, anti-aliased fonts. Alternate plans call for the Network Computer to use a standard monitor, or for the device to be designed after a laptop, and include a flat-panel LCD screen. Other versions of the Network Computer are planned as well.

Oracle's Ellison introduced the first prototype Network Computer at Oracle Open World, a three-day exhibition held January in Tokyo, Japan. There, in his keynote address, Ellison noted, "Unlike the PC, the Network Computer is designed to work on any microprocessor. [For] the prototype that we built, we happened to use the ARM microprocessor because it was very fast and used very little electrical power, but we're also going to build prototype NCs using Intel chips."

"You can build a family of machines with exactly the same software and the Network

Continued on page 74

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The Doctor ARRIVES

*An unprecedented international television film production
heralds the return of the Gallifreyan.*

BY JOSEPH RAZON

There is a police call box on Philip Segal's desk. Of course, it's not full-sized like the British emergency booth that has carried the Gallifreyan Timelord to his adventures since the 1963 debut of *Doctor Who*; rather, the 8-inch-tall model of TARDIS ("Time And Relative Dimensions In Space") looks very much like a paperweight. To the casual observer, the unusual artifact is the only indication that this ordinary office adjacent to a Vancouver, Canada, film soundstage has anything to do with *Doctor Who*.

Philip Segal is in the remarkable position of being the executive producer of a \$5-million film depicting the latest adventures of the popular, and apparently immortal, science fiction character. Segal is the man who has woven into a single fabric the interests and the goals of multiple-media giants on both sides of the Atlantic in an effort to revive a cultural phenomenon that has lain dormant for the past seven years.





Looking very "Whoish," Paul McGann is now the man with the keys to TARDIS. OPPOSITE: Sylvester McCoy makes his farewell appearance as the seventh Doctor in the film's opening sequence.



Physician Grace Holloway (Daphne Ashbrook) will share an emotional relationship with the Doctor (RIGHT BELOW), but it's unlikely to reach "Lois & Clark" dimensions. ABOVE RIGHT: The Doctors Who and Holloway make a narrow escape.

Working in close collaboration with BBC-1, BBC Worldwide, Universal Television, and the Fox television network, Segal has just completed a two-hour telefilm that, it is planned, will broadcast on both the Fox network in the United States and on the BBC in the United Kingdom this May.

Who fans are already well aware of the cast of this new incarnation; to briefly recap, British actor Paul McGann, whose credits include an over-the-top performance as Golic in *Alien 3*, as well as the second title role in the art-house classic *Withnail and I*, presides as the eighth Doctor. Like the seven actors who preceded him, this Doctor Who travels with a mortal companion; Dr. Grace Holloway, played by Daphne Ashbrook, is a heart surgeon drawn to the mysterious stranger when she discovers that he has two hearts (a physical attribute shared by all Gallifreyans). The Doctor's foe this time around is also a blast from the past; The Master, a renegade Timelord whose unsuccessful attempts on the Doctor's life go back to the 1960s. This time, however, he wears the guise of the well-known film actor Eric Roberts.

"My first encounter with Doctor Who was when I was a little boy," reminisces Segal. "My grandparents were in



Photos: Joe Lieberman / Fox / BBC Video

London. My grandfather was looking through the *Radio Times* [a British TV Guide] one day and said, 'Oh, this looks good!' That would have been the pilot episode of *Doctor Who*. And we sat down and watched with great delight. And it's been a love ever since. I've seen every episode.

"He's just a magical character. I was an oddball when I was a kid. I was an outcast when I was a little older. I didn't fit in very well. The Doctor was a wonderful companion in my fantasy world because he was a guy who said it was OK to be different. It's OK to be someone special. That's the way I saw it. And so for kids, it was wonderful. He was a quirky character that I just really related to. He was my friend. The funny thing about that story, as much of a cliché as it sounds, it's the same story you hear from the fans over and over again. It's magical the way it affects me."

Born and raised in England, Segal previously was an assistant to casting director Mike Fenton before becoming a literary agent at International Creative Management (ICM). In 1985, he became director of drama development at Columbia TV, subsequently working in a similar capacity at the ABC-TV network in charge of dramatic series. Under his tenure, Segal gave us *thirtysomething*, *Twin Peaks* and *Young Indiana Jones*.

"I started, eight years ago, trying to get the *Doctor Who* rights," Segal recounts. "It's been an enormous process. I



spent five of those years as head of production for Amblin' Television. But Dreamworks was going to be built, so that's why unfortunately Steven Spielberg couldn't continue with the project. But I wanted to continue because I believed in it. And Alan Yentob [Controller of BBC-1] was kind enough to let me do that. It's been an unbelievable ride, especially after the last several years.

"I mean, how this project actually got rolling, I really can't remember, it's been through so much in terms of the process. This is a co-production the likes of which has never been attempted by domestic television — a true co-production, creatively and financially.

"Four companies had to actually approve the script. Then I had to make sure I kept my promise to Alan Yentob in terms of the integrity of the show, its Britishness.

Then, Alan had approval of the Doctor. And then, of course, that didn't make the American network very happy. They were all entitled to their own points of view. So, I ended up being a Swiss diplomat."





Looking back at this long and winding process, Segal notes, "The remarkable thing is there are so many people outside this production who care about these characters. By some incredible feat, at the eleventh hour, we got everything in place in terms of casting approvals, script approvals, and everything else."

Star Paul McGann observes that "Phil Segal is actually the biggest *Doctor Who* fan in the world. It was Phil who persuaded me to do this, really. He talked about when he was a kid, saying 'The Doctor was my only friend,' and he means it."

For the first time in all of *Doctor Who*'s multidimensional wanderings, the telefilm brings the Timelord to the "New World," with principal photography in Vancouver, Canada, and second-unit shooting in San Francisco where the film is set. While it's easy to predict that *Doctor Who* will make some friends wherever he goes, the question of American television ratings is quite another matter. "He has what you might call an underground cult following in the United States. Mainstream America doesn't know who he is," says Segal.

Segal hopes to make a big "first impression" on these underprivileged Americans with a story of considerable scope. "Without giving too much away, it's *Doctor Who* versus The Master," Segal says. "The Doctor is sent to take

what he thinks are the remains of his enemy The Master back to Gallifrey to bury him. During the flight, something goes terribly wrong with the TARDIS and it crash-lands on Earth in 1999. And the adventure begins. It is a battle between good and evil. The Master attempts to destroy the Earth. It's not a cat-and-mouse chase. It's a very specific mission that the Doctor has. It's a very big story."

Segal confirms another rumored "first," one that has ruffled the feathers of some of the less flexible fans. For the first time, the Doctor's relationship with companion Dr. Grace Holloway will contain an element of romantic love. "For those who don't know him, we actually made two movies in one," he declares. "We've made a wonderful love story. I use that word very delicately, for obvious reasons. For those who know who he is, and love him, we have a very rich tapestry in the *Who* mythology. It's a very smart story."

"There is a wonderful chemical reaction between these two and it's very romantic. That's important to me. To tell a story for an American audience, so they can enjoy it without the hands-on of all this mythology."

But Segal emphasizes that the main focus of the story is not on the relationship. "The story is not about the Doctor falling so madly in love with a woman that he can't stand to be without her. That's not the story. The story is that he needs her to help him defeat The Master. Within the context of the mythology of the character, it was written that every time the regeneration process occurs, the Doctor's faculties got stranger and stranger. And that the process of regeneration caused all kinds of quirks within the character that we were really unable to assess until it happened.

This emotion is born out of one of those quirks."

Doctor Who's previous adventures over the years have swung from high and low camp to melodramatic adventure, using both film and video for its presentation. It appears that Segal's *Doctor Who* will be a straight action-adventure with some character humor.

Some fans have expressed concern that a polished, effects-laden *Doctor Who* might be wandering too far from the show's roots. "I want to deal with that. I've been

asked that question over and over again," Segal speaks anxiously. "When Verity Lambert [the show's first producer] set out to produce *Doctor Who* he never intended to have wobbly sets. He made a very smart television show, given the time and the money he had to work with thirty years ago. The wobbly sets came from the speed of the production and inability to edit. It was all done on the stage.

"That campiness came out of observation rather than intent. I think, as the show got written down, over the years, as we entered the McCoy years, the show got very campy and silly. It's very tragic. *Doctor Who* was never camp when Bill Hartnell did the role. When Patrick took the role, it started to become campier. Broader, but it was never intended to be camp. I think the Doctor ultimately became a parody of himself. In my opinion, the Britishness of the show is in its icons; his wardrobe, his TARDIS, and all of those things.

"Over the years fans have gotten to enjoy different things; jelly babies, sonic screwdrivers, sticks of celery, yo-yos, all the different things that became symbols of each character, of each Doctor, as they sort of made it their own character. And I think we've taken a lot of those things and put them in there."

While the U.S. audience is comprised primarily of people who don't know *Doctor Who*, or are only familiar with the Tom Baker incarnation, Segal clearly is hoping that the veteran fans will take the new Doctor as part of the official lineage. That's one reason why the script is filled with elements of the *Who* myths, including a pre-"regeneration" sequence featuring Sylvester McCoy — the seventh, and most recent, Doctor.

"I didn't set out to do *Doctor Who* because I felt I was the only one who understood it," says Segal. "That's not why I did it. I did it because I love this character and I believe in him. All I could do is bring my love and affection for the character to the project and hope the icons and the mythology I chose to lean on are those pieces of the mythology that other fans also love. I'm not going to please everybody. We're not going to do that. A lot of people won't like him. But if we can please most of the people..."

"It's always difficult whenever the Doctor regenerates into someone else. It's always hard to get used to the rhythm of that character and the new stories. I think it will be the same for the fans. There'll be some things they won't get used to at first... but I think they can slip into the rhythm very quickly."

One rumor that Segal wants to dispel immediately is the worry among fans that this incarnation of the Doctor will be "Americanized" for the viewing public.

"I don't think there's anything 'American' about *Doctor Who* at all. He's British! The only thing American about the story is that it takes place in San Francisco."

This fact, surmises Segal, got "interpreted as an Americanization of the characters. I don't think that's the intent



The Master (Eric Roberts) is back (LEFT), aided in his sinister schemes by a naive youngster named Chang Lee (Yee Jee Tso). Segal's *Doctor Who* will be a straight action-adventure with some character humor (ABOVE).

and I certainly don't think you could make an American Doctor if you tried."

Ostensibly, *Doctor Who* is a pilot for a potential movie of the week or hourly series. "Fox looks at it as a TV movie," says Segal. "Universal sees it as a pilot for a television series. I think the reason for this is that it was actually developed in the movie-for-television department at Fox. Everyone has to be careful how they articulate the label for this particular product. If you ask me, yes, it's a pilot. In terms of the lingo, yes, it's a 'back door' pilot."

Segal claims that he has no preference on how *Doctor Who* continues, whether it is as a TV movie of the week in the same vein as *Columbo*, or as a weekly hour show. What's important, he says, is that *Doctor Who* continues in some form. "There are some people who say that if it were in the two-hour format, it would be able to present a four-part serial concept as it was originally formatted in England. But if we are smart about the way we approach the storytelling, I think the one-hour would work just as well."

As the interview comes to a close, it occurs to Segal to offer one more cryptic tease before we make our departure. "For the TARDIS, we got the original blueprints that the BBC supplied me," says Segal. "It was meticulously rebuilt by craftsmen here. They did a wonderful job, all the way down to the last detail except for one detail, which I can't reveal."

"We'll keep that a surprise for the show." □

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Nowadays, stars are made, not born: Director Rob Cohen and FX innovator Phil Tippett on the magic of Dragonheart.

BY DAN PEREZ

How exactly do you go about creating a gigantic, mythical monster that also has the ability to act? Since Draco, the computer-generated co-star of *Dragonheart*, had to interact convincingly with its human co-star Dennis Quaid (*Enemy Mine*) for much of the movie, director Rob Cohen (*Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*) faced some daunting challenges. "Obviously, you've got Butch and Sundance," Cohen says, "but Sundance is in the computer; he's got to act, he's

got to talk, and he's not just a *T. rex* that wants to eat. So the ability for him to be expressive — his eyes, his hands, his mouth to do perfect lip-sync, his tongue — all that had to be designed with an eye toward a character that would really work. Again, if you go too far along that line you start getting into Disney, where he's not ferocious, he's not real; he's like Puff the Magic Dragon, and we didn't want that, either. It became a job of threading the needle."

To thread this particular needle, Cohen worked with Oscar-winning effects specialist Phil Tippett (*Jurassic*

DRAGONS



Photos: Universal City Studios and ILM

Park). "The dragon is 18 feet high," Cohen says. "He's 43 feet long and he has a 75-foot wingspan. He was designed by Phil Tippett and myself over a period of months, drawing upon Eastern mythological visions of the dragon more than Western. More lion-like, less serpentlike. More dinosaur in terms of hornage, scales, and size and yet more intelligent and [with] more human relatability."

After months of research and design work, Draco (whose voice is provided

Bowen (Dennis Quaid), a disenchanted knight of the 10th century, encounters the very last of a disappearing species — given voice by Sean Connery — in Dragonheart.



by Sean Connery) was born. "What I was concerned about," says Cohen, "was designing a dragon that was unlike people's expectations."

Dragonheart (due out from Universal on May 31) is the story of Bowen (Quaid), an idealistic, chivalrous 10th-century knight whose young charge, Prince Einon (Lee Oakes), is grievously wounded in a peasant uprising. In desperation, Queen Aislinn (Julie Christie) brings her dying son to a dragon's cave and implores the creature to save him. After the prince swears to rule with mercy and justice,

the dragon severs his heart and gives half to Einon, healing him.

But the prince grows up to be a wicked despot (David Thewlis), and Bowen, believing the dragon's flesh has poisoned the prince, becomes an embittered, cynical dragonslayer. It is not until he encounters Draco in battle that Bowen must re-evaluate his life and his calling.

Cohen took over the project after Richard Donner (*Superman*), who had worked on the movie for nine months, left, citing his inability to attract major stars such as Mel Gibson or Harrison

Phil Tippett on Designing *Dragonheart's* Draco

To anyone familiar with movie magic, Phil Tippett needs little introduction. From the *Star Wars* movies to *Dragonslayer*, Tippett has brought some of the most interesting and fanciful creatures on film to life via stop-motion and go-motion animation. With the advent of *Jurassic Park's* groundbreaking CGI effects, Tippett helped develop what became known as the Dinosaur Input Device, which is essentially a stop-motion armature whose motion can be directly recorded and stored in a computer's memory. He won an Oscar for the film, along with Stan Winston and Dennis Muren.

I caught up with Tippett at Phil Tippett Studios, where he was busy doing CGI animation of the alien "bugs" for the upcoming movie version of Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. He took a break to tell me about his role in the design of Draco, the dragon of *Dragonheart*.

"Our primary areas of concern," Tippett says, "were the look and the character of the dragon, and then we provided the production with a number of key sequences in animatic form (short, animated storyboard sequences) to block the action and detail some of the choreography and

continuity of the action."

Creating the maquette sculpture of the dragon was, Tippett noted, "a pretty lengthy process that we went through with Rob [Cohen]. He had pretty clear ideas about what he wanted the dragon to feel like, and it took a number of iterations on the design maquette level to get closer and closer and closer to what he had in mind."

Design considerations had to take into account a creature that could both speak dialogue and gesticulate. "It couldn't be like a conventional quadruped," Tippett said. "A great deal of design intent went



years of them rewriting and stalling around and then rip it away from him and give it to somebody else."

Ford (both of whom expressed initial interest in the film) to play Bowen. Cohen, intrigued by Charles Edward Pogue's script, still thought it needed work. "We did massive amounts of rewriting on the script because the script, when I got it, was, how shall we say, overflowery and very dark."

No script doctors were hired, however. "We stayed with Pogue for a lot of it, and I did some of it. I had a loyalty to his presence in the process because I felt that he had lived with it for so long, it would be ruthless to finally get the movie going after five

When Dennis Quaid expressed interest in playing the role of Bowen, Cohen notes that "he was not a front runner at the time." But Quaid impressed

Cohen and producer Rafaella De Laurentiis with his enthusiasm for the role. "I started thinking about what I could do to remove him from the California/Texas surfer boy look with facial hair, costuming, and so on," says Cohen. "Eventually, in reviewing all

his films, including *Enemy Mine*, I saw his strengths and I saw where things had gone wrong, and I felt like he would be a good choice for us, because he's a very fine actor. He does comedy well and drama well, which is a hard thing to find in our business.

"And since he'd done effects pictures like *Enemy Mine* and *Inner Space*, he knew the rhythms of an effects picture, which are slower for the actor than a normal movie. While we're working around with our computer measurements and all the stuff we have to do for CGI, he's not going to go crazy or lose the performance.

ABOVE: Dina Meyer, featured as Kara, focuses on her invisible co-star at the direction of Cohen (center) while Quaid looks on. **ABOVE LEFT:** Bowen's broken faith is restored by his alliance with the 43-foot beast, and by Kara (far left).

into integrating the wings so that you could see the body, and then articulating some reasonable skeletal structure that would allow the thing to walk on four feet but also to rear up and get to use its hands as expressive elements."

Once the five-foot-long final model of Draco was sculpted, Tippet's studio constructed a low-resolution computer model of the dragon for the animatic sequences. To aid in animation, Tippet again utilized the Dinosaur Input Device. "We reconfigured one of the T. rexes for the dragon in some of the stuff," Other sequences were done, Tippet notes, "with mouse clicks."

Tippet quickly dismisses the notion that advances in computer graphic technology can accomplish just about any kind of crea-

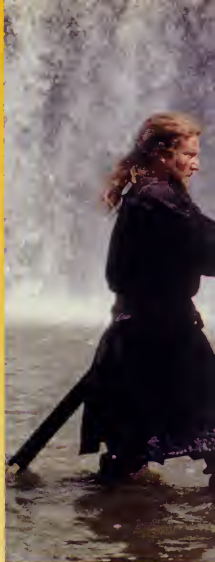


Phil Tippet has had close encounters with a variety of creatures, including the Garthok, from 1993's *Coneheads*.

ture effect now. "That's a load of crap," he says. "It's just junk. It's just stuff. It's tools —

it's like saying a mill and a lathe are the most brilliant things in the world: Look what we can make on 'em. It's the people who do the stuff and make the decisions and work out the designs and come up with the imaginative processes. The tools are extremely important, you can't mitigate that. In many ways the technology just makes it harder because it's untested, it hasn't been used — you're pushing the edge of the envelope. It hasn't got the patina of craft. The tools are being changed every five minutes. It's just maddening to try and figure out what stupid software package to use. Those issues are defined by your needs, by what you need to do your job. So it isn't the junk, it's the people."

Dan Perez



Eventually the wheel turned and it had to be Dennis Quaid."

Cohen wanted to create more than just dialogue for Draco: He wanted to create a persona for the dragon, based on Sean Connery. "I've taken every closeup from every Connery film that had ever been there and cut them into different computer files. Let's say I had a

file called Anger or Sardonic or Sarcastic or Pedagogical or Skeptical or Romantic or Humorous or whatever — I divided the human emotions into about twenty different files and then I'd just go through each Connery picture with an editor ... and then these files would fill up.

"Then you'd say, OK, here we have a shot in which the dragon says 'Einon was no innocent! He polluted the heart!' So OK, now let's go to Anger, and here's [a clip] from *The Hunt for*

Red October, here's one from *Robin and Marian*, and here's one from *Russia House*, where he explodes with anger. Now I'm not saying copy those emotions or copy that face, but that's the pocket you've got to work in when you're animating Draco at this moment. So that's how that worked."

According to Cohen, Connery makes no cameo or other appearances in the film. "I'll tell you this," Cohen says, "if you heard no sound and you looked at the dragon's face and said 'Who is this?' you would know."

The film was shot on location in Slovakia, near Hungary, at various sites, including castles, forests, caves, and an abandoned quarry where the crew constructed a 30-foot-high waterfall and a 250-foot-diameter lake. One location, in the hamlet of Zilina, featured the castle where Countess Elizabeth Bathory reportedly tortured young girls and bathed in their blood. Interiors were filmed in the capital city of Bratislava, which featured a modern film studio and facilities.

Aerial shots destined to provide both POV shots and background plates for Draco's flight were accom-



plished by mounting a Vistavision camera setup on a microlight plane. "I didn't want that helicopter look," Cohen says. "I figured that anything that has a 75-foot wingspan, when it flaps, doesn't just fly on an even course. It goes up and down and forks left and right, with thermals and wind shear and all that. So I figured the best thing to do would be to get a micro-light, and we got the best microlight pilot in Europe. So you get a real sense of flying, and when he comes in for an attack, we were able to get points of view where the microlight would go 5 feet over guys on horseback — stuff you could never do with a helicopter."

Interacting with a fantastic creature that won't be inserted until postproduction is always a difficult task for an actor, but Cohen notes that Quaid rose to the occasion, with a bit of help. "One, I had a poseable model that I could show him — you know, it's here, it's there, it's going to do this. I had a complete set of storyboards. I had thirty-five animatics from Phil Tippett [see sidebar] that showed a sequence roughly animated in a kind of computer cartoon animation. So he could

see how the fight sequences would take place and where the tail would go. Even though we made many changes on the set, he had an image.

"And then I played the voice of Draco to him. We hired a Scottish actor to do it, and it didn't work out. I just picked up the chores and then it became kind of an integral thing — I would sit behind the monitor and he'd say something to the dragon, to sticks or markers that we had all over the set, at 14 feet or 18 feet or 11 feet. And Dennis would move around the set and he would say a line and then I'd respond or whatever, and I'd play Draco. So he always had that instant response, like a fellow actor. And I got good at doing a Sean imitation. It was fun, and it brought us closer together as actor and director because we both had to work together to make the scene happen. But in the end, it was Dennis' vivid imagination that pulled it off. You'll look at the film and there's no thousand-mile stare. He's definitely relating to something that isn't there, and now that it is there, the fact that you know it *wasn't* there is really thrilling." □



LEFT: To play the role of Bowen, Dennis Quaid shed what Cohen calls "his Texicali surfer boy look." TOP: Bowen squares off against the evil despot King Eilonor (David Thewlis). ABOVE: Bowen and his humble allies, the quiet monk Gilbert (Pete Postlethwaite) and the peasant Kara.

A cabby gets the willies from his unusual fare, the costumed avenger known as "The Ghost Who Walks." BELOW: The Phantom (Billy Zane) on a mission to recruit a furry ally.

CALL THE PHANTOM anywhere. He will hear." — An old jungle saying, quoted by Lee Falk.

In 1936, the world was on the precipice of war. Japan had conquered Manchuria; Italy occupied Ethiopia; and Germany's Chancellor had written a worldwide best seller, entitled *Mein Kampf*, about his dreams for the renewed greatness of his country. It didn't take a genius to realize that these were troubled times. Yet, in that year, the American Congress passed legislation to assure America's neutrality; Europe's interests, it was argued, were not our own.

This was the world stage when The Phantom first appeared in the newspaper comics section on February 27, 1936 — exactly sixty years ago as this is written. The creation of young cartoonist Lee Falk, The Phantom could be viewed as one young man's reaction to the isolationist philosophy of the times; but the true art in



THE PHANTOM:



Photos: Andrew Cooper, Paramount Pictures

The First and Last of his Kind

BY CRAIG REID



ABOVE: Young Kit Walker learns the family secret, handed down through nineteen generations. OPPOSITE TOP: Billy Zane (LEFT) takes direction from Simon Wincer. BELOW: Perched on his skull-throne, *The Phantom* broods on his responsibilities as an enemy of evil and champion of justice.

Falk's creation lies in the fact that *The Phantom* has continued to embody high pulp adventure for generation after generation. He was the very first of the costumed heroes to see newsprint, and even his first comic book appearance, two years later in *Ace Comics* #11, preceded the debuts of Superman and Batman. When comics experts pinpoint the beginning of comics' "Golden Age" — a period that saw

hundreds of costumed champions of justice burst upon the scene and then fade away — most agree that it began with *The Phantom*.

Because he was the first of his kind, *The Phantom* shows a deeper relationship with the popular literary forms that preceded the rise of the comics than those who came after; the novels of E. M. Forster, of H. Rider Haggard, and of Rudyard Kipling taught Falk's generation the meaning of "high adventure." Falk learned that lesson well, and melded these influences with the stark and garish world of '30s pulp and radio drama to make something entirely new.

More than half-a-century later, those diverse influences are still discernible in *The Phantom's* adventures in newspaper strips, in Marvel's comic series, and even in the "cyberpulp" adventures of *Phantom 2040*, a futuristic animated version currently in worldwide syndication. While other superheroes have suffered multiple identity crises, have shed their costumes, changed their lifestyles, and shifted their moods, *The Phantom* has remained always pure to his roots and the spirit that made him.

And for good reason: Alone among costumed crusaders, *The Phantom* remains firmly under the guidance of his cre-

ator, Lee Falk, now well into his eighties and still writing the newspaper strip, while taking a strong consulting hand in all of *The Phantom's* other media endeavors. Despite the existence, somewhere, of a television pilot that was never broadcast, *The Phantom* has been seen on-screen only once, in a serial drama of the 1940s starring Tom Tyler. This year, "the ghost who walks" will, at long last, return to the cinema screen in the Paramount feature film *The Phantom*, opening this June in the United States, with a United Kingdom opening tentatively scheduled for November.

Movie rights to *The Phantom* rested with Paramount Pictures for several years before the studio thought to pair the property with Jeffrey Boam, a screenwriter who has shown considerable acuity in handling "intelligent pulp" with such credits as *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Lost Boys*, *Innerspace*, and the intensely gritty crime drama *Straight Time*.

Boam admits to complete ignorance of *The Phantom* before Paramount supplied him with a collection of Falk's work: on reading the comic strips, Boam was quickly taken in. "I always turned down these things because I didn't know what to do with them. But what attracted me was that he is rooted in reality. It's just so formal and conventional that I felt I understood it. It didn't strain my brain to accept what he was or where he lived. He is just so well-worked out by Lee Falk."

In the strip, *The Phantom's* adventures are narrated by a third person storyteller, privy to the uncanny truth behind the timeworn legend of *The Phantom*. Each of Falk's months'-long strip adventures begins with the retelling of the basic legend and the truth that lay behind "the man who cannot die."

Although Falk adjusted and realigned *The Phantom's* tale with some regularity during the first decade or three, the story Falk tells now is much the same as that recounted

in maximum detail in his 1972 paperback novel, *The Story of The Phantom* (the first of a highly collectible series written largely by SF and comics writer Ron Goulart, under the pseudonym "Frank Shawn"). The Phantom is known throughout the African kingdom of Bangalla as an immortal spirit of justice who has haunted the jungle, bringing woe to evildoers, for centuries. Only the members of the Bandar pygmy tribe know the truth — that the present-day Phantom is the twentieth man to wear the costume and mask that identify him.

The tradition began in the early 16th century, when a group of Bandar found young Kit Walker washed up on the Bangallan shore, the sole survivor of a pirate raid that had taken the life of his sea captain father. Nursed back to health by his Bandar friends, Kit later found the body of one member of the pirate band washed up on shore. With a will strengthened by his loss, Walker took "the oath of the skull," swearing on the head of the dead pirate that he would devote his life to the defeat of such evildoing scum. Thereafter, The Phantom took up residence in a skull-shaped cave found by the Bandar and made taboo to all but The Phantom, and the family he soon established there with a daughter of the famed freebooter Eric the Rover. And when Kit Walker died, his son, also named Kit, took the same oath on the skull of the same dead pirate, thus becoming the second Phantom — and setting a pattern that the generations would follow up to the present Phantom #20, and even to the 22nd Phantom of the year 2040.

Always, The Phantom's weaponry is simple: wits, courage, and a knife. And depending upon his generation, he might also use a sword, bow and arrow, or a pistol. Thanks to patrilineal generation, Falk has cunningly established a character who is entirely human, yet does not live by constraints of time or mortality; the narratives easily oscillate between one Phantom battling 18th-century pirates, to another foiling the sultans of colonial India, to another outwitting German Nazis in the 1930s.

This broad canvas leaves room for many stories but, for now, Boam could tell only one. "The initial challenges in putting the script together involved deciding which Phantom to pick, in which period in time would the story occur, who would be the love interest, and then to pick a tone for the film. I decided on using the 1930s and, even though there are pirates in the film, the main villain is a rich, fascist American, with a lot of panache, who wants a lot of power — although what he wants to do with the power is only suggested in the film. Treat Williams [who recently put his career back on track with a subtle, deadpan performance as Hollywood honcho Mike Ovitz in HBO's *The Late Shift*], portrayed this villain like a Clark Gable doing Howard Hughes — a vibrant sort of guy with a villainous goal. The film starts off in the jungle, moves to New York City, then climaxes at an uncharted volcanic island.

A great deal of location shooting was required for *The Phantom*, which "ran pretty smoothly," according to Boam. "We filmed for about four weeks in Thailand and America, then the rest was done in Australia."

Knowledge of the locale was a major help to *The Phantom*'s director, Australian Simon Wincer, whose past credits include *Lonesome Dove*, *Free Willy* and *Operation Dumbo Drop*. "Simon and I agree," says Boam, "that what makes a successful film is the script, story, and character. It



doesn't matter how technically fine a film is; if you don't have a good story, you have nothing. So once Simon was happy with the script, he pretty much had the actors do what was on the pages.

"The back story to the film is that The Phantom-to-be, alias Kit Walker, is sent by the current Phantom, his father, to school in New York. Kit (played by Billy Zane, known for his sea maniac character in *Dead Calm*), is just a regular guy, who falls in love with a girl named Dianna Palmer (played by Kristy Swanson of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). His father dies,



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The Phantom is not always a lonely brooder, however; his companions include Devil, his pet wolf, his horse Hero (ABOVE), and the lovely, sophisticated Miss Diana Palmer (Kristy Swanson, opposite). BELOW: The Phantom practices his "jungle creep" in the art deco lobby of a big-city office building.

so he must return to the jungle to be The Phantom. He abandons Diana and never talks to her again."

But Diana's love brings her to the jungle searching for Kit, where she runs into The Phantom. He recognizes her, but of course she remains unaware of The Phantom's true identity. Soon after, however, we find that Diana is not as easily gulled as, say, Lois Lane is by Superman. Throughout the story, the legend of The Phantom is doled out in mysterious little pieces."

To a large extent, whether *The Phantom* succeeds depends upon if audiences will buy Kit Walker's multiple personalities: as a much-feared legend who has died twenty deaths, yet still lives; as a friend and protector of the Bandar; and as the "regular guy" who is torn between love for his sweetheart and duty to his name and calling.

"He is very friendly, and although he comes across as mysterious, I think the mystery is in the way he is perceived by others. In fact he has a very self-deprecating attitude, he's not brooding like Batman. Instead, he is well-adjusted and very comfortable with himself even though he is dressed in that purple outfit and living in a skull-shaped cave.

"With beginnings similar to Tarzan, he's a mystical jungle guy, his parentage is obscure in terms of where they came from, and since his mother disappeared, we know nothing about who she is. Although the natives treat The Phantom like a ghost or deity, we have one character, Captain Horton, who is in charge of the jungle patrol, kind of like a colonial force in the jungle; he really knows who The Phantom is, but they just hang out together like two regular guys. So basically, he's a straight-up kind of guy, and there is really nothing mysterious about him at all."

Falk's Phantom is a hero who overcomes his enemies



largely by cunning and force of will, using his determination to defeat evil as a tool in developing extraordinary human abilities, such as pain endurance, or the ability to remain underwater for lengthy periods of time. "When The Phantom gets involved in a fight, we don't have those big protracted martial art-style fights, the hand-to-hand



stuff is very brief," says Boam. "Instead, he uses the surrounding environment to the best of his advantage. The kind of action I really like is action that involves speed and movement, action that takes place in, on, and around vehicles. Things like planes, trains, cars, and speedboats. All have that really fast, forward movement.

"There are a couple of real neat chases in the film. One involves a truck that winds up tipping over on a rope suspension bridge over a huge canyon, then the truck flips over and gets caught in the ropes of the bridge. So instead of falling into the canyon, the truck is dangling upside down from the bottom of the bridge — and then the action sequence *begins* from there. There's also a scene where The Phantom has to make a transfer from a plane onto his horse — and a really cool scene in an elevator, where The Phantom is sliding down an elevator cable in a New York skyscraper, while being chased by the elevator that is going to crush him, then he rides a horse down 5th Avenue and Central Park while being chased by cops on motorcycles. The stunt coordinator (Vic Armstrong) did a great job on all of it."

The Phantom was, in many ways, the first of his kind, the

progenitor of a legion of costumed heroes that would follow him to the four-color page. But he was also the last of his kind, a daring European adventurer — as much a champion of Western empire as the pirates and colonial tyrants that he fought, carrying the banner of justice in a time when the line between good and evil was an easy consensus.

Boam says that he's been offered comic characters before, but has always avoided them. "The one thing about comic book hero characters," he says, "is that a lot of the new ones are surreal. The stories take place during strange times and the heroes come from other planets. The characters are out of reality, people who have never been born, created out of some form of energy, wear weird outfits, and they can either fly or have strange powers. It just gets so crazy."

Lee Falk has kept The Phantom simple, real, and clear-headed for over sixty years, while the world at large has become increasingly muddled. And that simple clarity may perhaps be *The Phantom's* greatest strength; if handled correctly, it could feel like a breath of fresh air to today's moviegoers. □

In the race to Hollywood, how does Dark Horse outrun Marvel and DC?

BEHIND BARB·WIRE™

BY TANYA ANN FLETCHER

ALITTLE OVER TEN YEARS AGO, Mike Richardson was a young, hopeful bookstore owner with a maxed-out credit card. But the \$2,500 credit limit that financed the first in his chain of Pegasus Books stores was a toehold on what, in a remarkably short time, has become a multimedia empire — a major force in the comics publishing industry, and a genuine Hollywood player.

In the mid-'80s, Richardson's successful retail enterprise spun off a modest publishing company, Dark Horse Comics. At the time, there were a dozen or so independent comics companies born with the rise of the "direct sales" market, which allowed smaller publishers to get their product into stores nationwide — breaking the newsstand distribution monopoly that had helped keep Marvel and DC on top for decades.

Most of those small publishers disappeared in the late-'80s, as both Marvel and DC flooded the direct market with their own creator-owned "alternate market" titles. But Dark Horse managed to hang on, in part because Mike Richardson was willing to gamble the limited profits from "anti-superhero" titles such as *Concrete* and *Flaming Carrot* on the licensing of such Hollywood properties as *Aliens* vs. *Predator*, *Godzilla*, and *Star Wars*. The name recognition helped Dark Horse scrape through the shake-out that followed; and the fact that Dark Horse lavished as much creativity on its licensed products as on its original series comics was noted and appreciated by fans, critics, and even the filmmakers themselves. Given this history, it's little wonder that Dark Horse has been able to gain its current privileged status in the moviemaking capital.

Still living and working in Portland, Oregon, Richardson seems to have achieved something extremely rare in Hollywood or anywhere — success on his own terms. "I like living here," he says. "Aside from business, the quality of life is much higher here as well. A lot of people from Los Angeles must agree since they're all moving up here now."



Barb Wire, a.k.a. Barbara Kopetski, emerges from the flat two-color page into curvaceous full-spectrum reality in the person of Pamela Anderson Lee.





Photos: Ron Balazdoni, Gramercy Pictures

Dark Horse now ranks fourth in the comic book field. "We make up about 8 to 10 percent of the market," notes Richardson. And Dark Horse's great success with its initial film projects, *The Mask* and *Time Cop*, have helped to accelerate its growth in recent years.

Hoping to give the company a similar boost in 1996 is the current feature-film adaptation of Dark Horse's action heroine Barb Wire, who fights for freedom and justice in a ravaged America undergoing its second civil war. "She's a former freedom fighter who gets involved despite her attempts to stay neutral," explains Richardson. Created by Chris Warner, the Barb Wire lore was brought to the screen from a script by Chuck Pfarrer and Adam Rifkin and is set in Steel City, the only neutral territory left in the United States. At the center of this area is the Hammerhead Bar and Grille, run by Barbara Kopetski, a.k.a. "Barb Wire," a former freedom fighter for the resistance movement who now has settled down to take care of her young brother. Then trouble arises when former friend Axel Hood arrives, asking for help and sucking her back into the fight against the treacherous Congressional Army.

Tackling the role of bodacious Barb is everyone's favorite *Baywatch* babe Pamela Anderson Lee, who puts on her fish-nets, pushes up her assets, and comes out guns ablazin' in this new action-adventure film.

"Pam is an enormous star, especially in Europe where there seems to be a huge interest in this movie," says Richardson. "Overseas she's mobbed wherever she goes. We went to the Cannes Film Festival and it was unbelievable. She's very good in this movie and moves well with the action, so I think, overall, it's going to be a success."

If success depends upon whether Anderson's *Baywatch* audience is really hankering to see their favorite lifeguard straddling a Harley, guns blazing as she flies through a sheet of plate glass, success may well be in the cards. "Barb Wire is very much about a strong woman in control of her own destiny," says Richardson. "We've had successful female action heroes before. If you go see *Alien(s)* with Sigourney Weaver, tell me if she isn't a great female action hero on a par with any action

male hero you've seen. She's terrific, and the same thing with Linda Hamilton in *Terminator 2*. So it's obviously the right vehicle that makes the hero."

Bringing *Barb Wire* to the big screen did require a few modifications from the comic book. "Whenever we do this, we take the key elements of the characters — the heart — and build a story around the character that could be told in a two-hour picture," says Richard-





son. "In the comic, for instance, there are other superheroes that exist in her world. In the movie world there are no other superheroes; Barb is the amazing person in this world, and it didn't seem appropriate to populate it with others. So we put her in unusual circumstances so she could do extraordinary things for the survival of the United States."

While Lee's augmented cleavage generates enough publicity unto itself, *Barb Wire* ran into woes that made their way into the headline-hungry tabloid press. At one point production halted when Lee suffered a miscarriage; then original director and co-screenwriter Adam Rifkin (*The Dark Backward*) was

fired after a week of shooting.

Director David Hogan recalls, "I was coming home from doing a music video and they said they were going to release the director who was on it." That was a Saturday night; shooting began on the following Monday.

Hogan's extensive second-unit direction for the action scenes of *Aliens 3* and *Batman Forever* had brought him to the attention of *Barb Wire*'s producers. "I was originally interviewed for the job before," Hogan says, "but they didn't like what I had to say. Ironically, I ended up doing what I told them in the first place in regard to color, tone, and production design."

The sudden start may have made it rough for him to put his personal stamp on the film, but Hogan boasts that only eleven minutes of Rifkin's footage remain in the final edit. Hogan feels he was able to give the film his very own brand of stylistic "genius," saying, "I've done about 200 music videos, so I was familiar with texture, tones, and working with the camera."

Barb Wire may not set the box office on fire, but with a modest \$20 million budget, it would be a big hit with only modest business — or could bomb without creating much harmful fallout. In fact, Mike Richardson already seems more focused on Dark Horse's upcoming slate than on the topic at hand, as he runs down the various films on his company's horizon.

Richardson seems a bit miffed when he mentions George Clooney's abrupt departure from the Dark Horse production of *The Green Hornet* for a Spielberg dramatic project — and his equally sudden casting as Batman shortly thereafter. "But, ironically, when we did the treatment for the movie, we always had Jason Scott Lee in mind," says the ever-optimistic entrepreneur. "We think he's a wonderful actor and know he'll be spectacular in the role." It's

OPPOSITE: Barb's estranged lover Axel Hood (Temuera Morrison, left), Barb, and Cora D. (Victoria Rowell) are joined in a mission to save the democratic resistance. **ABOVE:** The tough-as-nails femme asserts herself. **BELOW:** An assortment from Dark Horse's ground-breaking catalog.





Barb may be tough, but she's not invulnerable. In fact, much like Lee Falk's Phantom, she has no super-powers at all!

expected that Ron Underwood (*Tremors*, *City Slickers*) will direct.

Concrete, Dark Horse's man of stone, and its first solid hit in the comics field, is currently in development at Disney with a script by Larry Wilson and

creator Paul Chadwick. Richardson notes that computer graphics will be the primary means of bringing the massive anti-superhero to life; a late 1996 start date seems to be in the cards.

Virus, created by Chuck Pfarrer, is set up at Universal with Gale Anne Hurd (*T2*, *The Relic*) producing. Richardson says the film is in the horror-SF vein of *Alien* and *Terminator*. "It's the story of a merchant ship that stumbles across an abandoned foreign military ship in the eye of a storm. On board, they discover experimental radar gear that has picked up a signal from another world. Ultimately, they discover that a virus has, essentially, taken over the ship."

Universal is also in development with *Black Cross*, based on another Chris Warner comic about a post-apocalyptic America after the world's ecosystem has broken down. "The lead character is a gunslinger who used to work for the government and witnessed atrocities. Because of that, he's refused to become a part of the safe green zone, so he's marked Black Cross," says Richardson. "The story is basically a spaghetti Western of the future, and will probably feature an

established action star in the lead role."

Enemy, created by Stephen Grant, is being adapted by David Goyer for the Fox network in the United States. "This will be our first entry into the world of television," says Richardson. "The story is about an individual who, because of a near-death experience, finds himself going from town to town, sought out by ghosts who want him to solve their murders."

Disney has also shown interest in Arthur Adams' *Monkeyman* and O'Brien, which Dark Horse will publish in comic form later this summer. The storyline follows the adventures of a spunky young woman and an apeman from another dimension.

And, of course, there are the forthcoming follow-ups to Dark Horse's successful initial entries into feature-film production: *The Mask* and *Time Cop*. Director Chuck Russell will return for *The Mask* sequel which, Richardson projects, could go into production late this year, upon the delivery of a script and after Jim Carrey finishes his interim commitments. "There are various discussions of what directions to go in now," says Richardson, "and Chuck has his own ideas — so we're still not sure what it will end up being like."

Meanwhile, *Time Cop* may have proven to be one of Jean Claude Van Damme's most successful films to date and a promising franchise character, but Richardson notes that it's a 50-50 split as to whether it will be a theatrical sequel or a TV series spin-off. "We

have a story. At this point we don't know where it's going, but something will be done with it." One sticking-point may be persuading JCVD to do a sequel for the first time in his career.

Despite the fact that a tiny contingent of hippies and anarchists loved it, don't expect a sequel to last year's critically lambasted *Tank Girl*, based on the popular British comic, published by Dark Horse in the United States. "There was a movie to do there, but the problem was, they had the conceit that movie audiences would understand comics and understand what they were doing when they put comic panels in the movie. I talk to people who are not interested in comics who have no idea why live action changed into comic art. They didn't get it. I think that was the problem."

Despite all this activity, Richardson avers that comic books are still the number one priority — if only because, without the source material, Dark Horse wouldn't be in Hollywood in the first place. And certainly, no comic publisher that placed comics at a low priority would be able to draw the talent that Dark Horse does. Currently, their *Godzilla* is carrying a four-issue story written by *Repo Man* writer-director Alex Cox. Those who know Cox's films know they can expect the unexpected, as the great green icon of "kaiju" falls under the control of a mad scientist with a time machine. "And yet it stays very true to the spirit of *Godzilla*," editor Randy Stradley assures us, "and it's a hell of a lot of fun." Kaiju fans will also be looking forward to Dark Horse's adaptation of the new Gamera film that recently broke Tokyo box office records. "Of course, when we licensed Gamera, the first thing on our minds was, can we put him together with *Godzilla*?" Stradley says.

Unfortunately, the rivalry between the giant monsters' parent studios — *Godzilla*'s Toho and Gamera's Dai-ichi — remains too strong, so the great ones seem fated never to meet. "But at least we tried," Stradley sighs wistfully.

Dark Horse's *Manga* line came out firing both barrels this year, with *Domu* — a classic work from the pen of Katsuhiro Otomo, the creator of *Akira* — finally available in English, and *Dominion*, the new epic by Masamune Shirow, Otomo-influenced writer-artist who electrified Manga fans last year with his brilliant *Ghost in the Shell* series.

Of course, the Dark Horse line of licensed characters is stronger than ever, and the work done in that line has become bolder and more assured.

Continued on page 70



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Hollywood has set up our planet for a spate of invasions; in the vanguard is David Twohy's *The Arrival*.

ALIEN BEACHHEAD

BY ED FLIXMAN



Photo: Bob Vermaak/Live Entertainment/Onyx

Aside from box office grosses, the reason most frequently offered for the new respectability that science fiction enjoys in Hollywood is the generation. Twenty years ago, *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* demonstrated what filmmakers who understood the genre could accomplish; today, many of the talents now reaching maturity are just old enough to recall the sci-fi boom of the '50s, and just young enough to have taken Spielberg and Lucas as role models in their late youth.



When this magazine first started up, I'd been away from film reporting for a few years, so I asked Bill Warren, one of the more knowledgeable guys in Hollywood SF circles, to fill me in. Among the things he told me, I particularly remember him saying, "This fellow David Twohy, who wrote *The Fugitive* — he's really quite knowledgeable about science fiction, and he directs as well. I think that's someone who you'll want to keep tabs on..."

It turned out to be pretty easy to keep tabs on Twohy. Shortly after our conversation, *Waterworld* was announced, with Twohy co-writing with Peter Rader; it would have been hard to miss the copious prerelease press that film received — all of it condemnatory. Even now, after largely positive reviews, and in defiance of the fact that the film made money for Universal Studios, the mention of *Waterworld* remains an occasion for jibes about Hollywood excess, particularly among those who have never seen the film.

"Some regard *Waterworld*'s box office — it's currently pushing



Photos: Bob Mirshak, Live Entertainment/Onion

\$300 million worldwide — as vindication,” says Twohy. “But at the same time, you wonder what it would have done, and how it would have been received, had there been no prepublicity, and if it had been judged only on its own merits.

“Some people think it’s the worst film of all time, and some think it’s the greatest. I don’t think it’s a perfect film, and neither does the director, Kevin Reynolds. There are some spectacular things about it — the attack scene at the end of the first part, particularly, when the smokers raid the atoll — I think that’s the greatest aquatic stuff that will ever be filmed.”

Amid the search for spectacle, *Waterworld*’s critics tend to ignore, or to gloss over, its human dimension; it seems the “balance-sheet” method of film criticism can’t place a price tag on story value. What



OPPOSITE: Charlie Sheen as Zane Ziminsky and the array of satellite dishes that are his ears for listening to the stars. ABOVE: Ziminsky infiltrates the secret alien base, deep beneath the hills of Mexico. LEFT: Writer-director David Twohy behind the camera.

I found most charming about *Waterworld* is that it exalted the human spirit, without lying about human nature.

“You mean when he whacked her with the paddle?” Twohy jibes, deflating my ponderous inquiry. But he concedes that there was a conscious effort to convey something of the meaning of “family” in the film, “particularly in those scenes between the mariner and the girl. That was something that Kevin Costner was fighting for.

“But, overall, it was unfortunate that there were two directors on



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Photo: Bob Marshall, Live Entertainment/Oren



Photo: Bob Marshall, Live Entertainment/Oren

TOP: SETI program supervisor Gordy (Ron Silver) is briefed on the startling anomaly discovered by Zane and his lab partner (Richard Schiff). ABOVE: Zane and his girlfriend Char make a narrow escape from the alien's underground lair. OPPOSITE TOP: Inside the alien base. BELOW: A convincingly complex miniature radio telescope is set up by Richard Cross and Jon Craig from the David B. Sharp Productions FX house.

the film," he adds, referring to the contention between Costner and Reynolds in postproduction, which ended with Costner exercising his right to the final cut.

The Arrival, tentatively scheduled for a U.S. release this June, with U.K. distribution still to be determined, is his first film as director since 1992's *The Grand Tour* (a

Disaster in Time, an adaptation of the SF novella *Vintage Seasons* by the late couple Henry Kuttner and Catherine Moore). The gap was prompted largely by Twohy's success as a screenwriter. "I knew

from the day I got out of college that screenwriting was to be my avenue to directing," he says. "I got trapped into that rich, successful screenwriter mode for a while; now it's time to get out there and really establish myself as a director."

Twohy has bypassed several earlier opportunities to direct, in most instances where he was offered lesser budgets. "You get spoiled," he says. "You want a bigger budget for each film that you make, not because you want more money in your pocket — you want more days in your shooting schedule, you want better talent around you, and you want more filmmaking tools available. Having done a \$5-million film, when someone comes to me with the offer of a similar budget, I know what kind of pain that is, what kind of shooting schedule I have to cram the story into. I don't think I can do my best work at that level."

"When the opportunity to make *The Arrival* at \$25 million came about, I leapt at it. While I have more or less the same number of shooting days as I had on my first film, I was able to stretch out the postproduction and preproduction, and I was able to get some very good people around me, including Tom Smith, who used to run Industrial Light and Magic."

Smith, as producer, is putting his effects background to good use as he oversees postproduction; but *The Arrival*, Twohy cautions, isn't intended as the sort of action-effects-spectacle that so often is promised — and so seldom delivers — at this time of year. "It has action and effects, but it's more of a suspense film," says Twohy.

Charlie Sheen stars as Zane Ziminsky, a radio astronomer. "I've always been interested in astronomy and cosmology," Twohy says, "and I wanted particularly to update that image. Most people still think of an astronomer [as someone] looking through the eyepiece of a Mount Palomar-like telescope, and it's not like that at all. Astronomers today are more apt to listen to the stars than look at them."

"So I thought it was intriguing for a character to be a radio astronomer, listening to the stars, who discovers that not only are we receiving signals from the stars, but that someone here on Earth is



Photo: Matt Ulman, David Sharp Productions

responding to them, sending signals back. That leads him to a wild journey into the bowels of Mexico ...” At this point, Twohy told us a bit *too much* about what Ziminsky finds. He may be the writer-director, but we don’t think it’s right to tell you.

Those whose reading habits are as strange as our own will notice that Twohy has woven a bit of actual UFO-conspiracy lore into his plot. But, while there are those who actually believe that there is an underground base in Mexico populated by visitors from another world, Twohy is not one of them, nor does he follow saucer lore with any great interest. “I did a fair amount of research into the astronomy aspect,” he says, “but the UFO lore I pretty much picked up along the way.”

UFOs have become a topic of considerable fascination in Hollywood — a situation only partially explicable by recent leaps in effects technology, and the current popularity of *The X-Files*. *The Arrival* is the vanguard of this invasion, to be followed over the next year or so by *Independence Day*, *Men in Black*, *Mars Attacks!* and *Contact* — all of them monster-budget spectacles with directorial heavyweights calling the shots.

Back when it was under development at Disney under the title *Shockwave*, *The Arrival* was the first of these to be announced as a “go” project — two years ago, before *The X-Files* was recognized as a solid hit. Nevertheless, Twohy dismisses any idea that “copycatting” is at work behind the trend. “We all know that cycles occur in Hollywood, and nobody knows why,” he says. “Perhaps it’s just that cycles have a certain gestation period — things remaining dormant, and just at this moment: Time’s up. It’s not as if people were reading each other’s scripts and going off to develop their own. It just happens. Sometimes you roll the dice, and they land on top of each other.”

While postproduction on *The Arrival* winds up, Twohy has no problem keeping busy — he’s currently putting the final polish on the script for Ridley Scott’s *G.I. Jane*, which of course you’ve heard about, since Demi Moore is in the title role. Like many before him,



Photo: Matt Ulman, David Sharp Productions

Twohy testifies to the great pleasure of collaborating with Scott — “It’s definitely been a joy,” he says. “He is so visually oriented — instead of giving me notes, he draws me little storyboards.”

Despite the pleasure of this particular experience, Twohy plans to put his days as a “top screenwriter” behind him, though he does expect to keep writing as a part of his filmmaking role. “My agents keep asking me, ‘Do you have to write everything you direct, or can we start sending you scripts?’ I would like to think I could just find a script and direct it. But each person’s underlying sensibilities are so individual, I expect that I’ll probably wind up finding a script with a good underlying story, rework the material, and then direct that. I don’t like that notion, and I would rather take a finished script and step into that — stretch my directorial muscles.

“But I’m too opinionated for that.” □

The Unsinkable SATELLITE OF LOVE

Writer-director-producer Jim Mallon and writer-star Mike Nelson see a rosy future for their mad experiment, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

BY DON E. PETERSON

AS 1995 CAME TO A CLOSE, IT seemed assured that 1996 would be a banner year for the people at Best Brains, Inc., the production outfit behind *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, Comedy Central's long-running comedy/trash-film series. And they had earned it.

It may look like nothing but fun, fun, fun on the "Satellite of Love," where, week after week, Mike Nelson—former temp worker, present-day lab rat—and his robot companions are forced to watch the worst films ever made, with only their own wisecracks to help maintain their sanity. But it's also been a lot of work, work, work. Despite appearances, it's not easy to transform a casually improvised local television show into a nationwide cult phenomenon.

For the benefit of our U.K. readers, and anyone else whose formal introduction to *MST3K* still lies in the future, some background: It all began about a decade ago, at a



little public television station in Madison, Wisconsin, where a young employee named Jim Mallon (unknowingly destined to be president of Best Brains and, better yet, the alter ego of femme robot Gypsy) first met Kevin Murphy (destined for Tom Servo greatness). The ambitious Mallon, noting the abundance of idle film equipment about the station, quickly assembled the microscopic budget that underwrote his feature film debut *Blood Hook*—a splatter-comedy about a mad bait-shop proprietor.

Blood Hook did not lead to greatness—at least, not right away. Before long, Mallon and Murphy were again looking for gainful employment. Then Mallon found a classified ad in a local paper, seeking a "film director" for KTMA 23, a UHF television station in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Dr. Ruth Adams (Faith Domergue) in a tight spot with a Met-alunan mutant (pronounced "mute-ant"). SF fans may find their humor tested when Crow, Mike, and Tom Servo (left to right, below) abuse the SF classic *This Island Earth*.



"It turned out," says Mallon, "that they were looking for a film *inspector*." It wasn't the young filmmaker's dream to oversee quality-control on a film duplicator. But KTMA, a new station in an already established market, needed to make a radical move to survive; shortly after the young go-getter arrived in the station manager's office, equipped with glowing press clips about the making of *Blood Hook*, Mallon had a job. Several jobs, in fact; building and licensing the station had taken considerable investment, and the owners' purse strings had tightened. There was little money for staff, and next to none for financing the TV programming that Mallon wanted to do.

But, with Murphy as co-conspirator, Mallon began creating local comedy

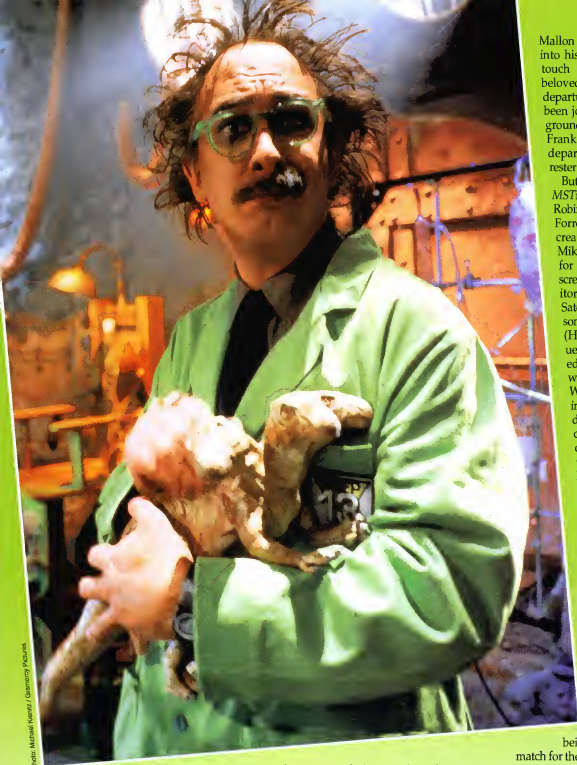


Photo: Michael Kienitz / Gramercy Pictures

shows for the little station. "When a movie ran fifteen minutes short, we did a little parody of *60 Minutes* to fill the gap, with wild, made-up news stories," Mallon recalls. "All kinds of crazy stuff — on New Year's Eve we did a three-hour broadcast built around the concept of an annual tradition that we made up — that every year, the people of Minneapolis would gather downtown to greet the New Year as a watermelon dropped off the side of a building.

"It was fun, but with the day job on top of it, we were headed for burnout. At the time, it was the beginning of a big comedy boom, and I thought, why not get some of Minneapolis's comedy talent involved? At the time, the only person I knew in that world was Joel Hodgson."

A man of multiple careers — sculptor,



ABOVE: Dr. Clayton Forrester (Trace Beaulieu) shares an affectionate moment with a lab pet. OPPOSITE TOP: Beaulieu is Crow; Kevin Murphy is Tom Servo. BELOW: Jeff Morrow as Exeter recruits scientists Ruth and Cal (Rex Reason) to rescue his planet.

inventor, toy designer, and stand-up comic—Hodgson was and is the living embodiment of Gizmonics (the science of Applied Gizmos; see the first four seasons of *MST3K* for details). The core concept of *Mystery Science Theater*, as well as the initial designs for the robots, were pure Hodgson; but it was the collaborative writing and individual performances of the Best Brains troupe of “cowtown puppeteers” that gave figurative flesh to the assembled household gadgets that make up the show’s robotic cast.

Hodgson’s comedy cohorts Trace Beaulieu (Crow/Dr. Clayton Forrester) and Josh Weinstein (Gypsy/Servo/Dr. Larry Erhardt) filled out the cast in the very beginning; when Weinstein left to pursue stand-up comedy success,

Mallon and Murphy adroitly stepped into his robot roles; it was Murphy’s touch that transformed Servo into beloved Tom Servo. Since Weinstein’s departure, mad scientist Forrester has been joined in his “Deep 13” underground lair by Frank Conniff (“TV’s Frank”) and, with Conniff’s recent departure, by his mother, Pearl Forrester (Mary Jo Pehl).

But no departure was as scary to the *MSTies* as that of Joel Hodgson (“Joel Robinson,” the original subject of Dr. Forrester’s mad experiment), series creator, and head writer. Although Mike Nelson had been a staff writer for some time, and a frequent on-screen presence playing assorted visitors and “hexscreen” callers at the Satellite, it took most of the fifth season for the fan buzz to settle down. (Hodgson, meanwhile, has continued in his quest to invent new comedy forms; last year, HBO underwrote his live show “The TV Wheel,” a comedy experiment involving models, magic, and random madness. Apparently, the concept was too advanced for the cable network, which is still sitting on its tapes of the event. Hodgson has also done some work in a slightly familiar style for the Cartoon Network’s spacebound talk show *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast*.)

When Joel Robinson escaped from the Satellite of Love, disguised as a crate of Ham-dingers [processed pork], Dr. Forrester needed another guinea pig to continue his crazed experiment. Conked on the noggin, Deep 13 temp worker Mike Nelson became *MST3K*’s new lab rat/host, as well as head writer of the show.

And now, a movie star. “The TV show, already being movie length, is a perfect match for the big screen,” says Nelson. “And we’re able to do the kinds of things we’ve always wanted to do on the TV but couldn’t. But the magical thing will be the movie audience; when you get a group of people together to watch this thing, it just becomes exponentially more fun. Every time we’ve had a showing with a large crowd, the reaction is unbelievable. That’s gratifying to see. That’s why we wanted to bring it to the big screen because it works well in that form.”

The troupe’s 1992 live show, a *MSTing* of *World Without End*, was in fact what clinched the movie deal, when Mallon invited Universal execs to Minneapolis to see what happens when a live audience shared the joke. Since that was their first-ever live show, it was a typically gutsy move on Mallon’s part. “I

couldn't have stacked the audience better, though," Mallon laughs. The show was part of the first official national gathering for the fans, "and these were the real hard-core MSTies; there were more people there from California than from Minneapolis." The second live show, 1994's *This Island Earth*, was an opportunity to test lines from the script, and preview the film (though none of the audience knew that at the time) for the faithful.

The film's budget was a remarkably modest \$2 million — a figure no major studio-released film has matched in a long, long time, and a virtual guarantee that this will be a moneymaker. Remarkably, Mallon reveals that film execs still tried to "lowball" the project when he presented the budget. "I know, it seems weird, when this movie cost the same as a few days of lunches for *Waterworld*. But there seems to be an automatic mode they go into when they hear a budget — the immediate reaction is to offer the filmmakers less." As it turns out, *MST3K: The Movie* has a lower budget than *This Island Earth* had, almost a half-century ago. The film could gross as little as \$8 million and be highly profitable, though it will have to do considerably better before distribution in the United Kingdom will be attempted.

In developing the film's story, says Nelson, "we kept new and confusing elements to a minimum, for people who are uninitiated. We felt it best to get to the film and do what we do best, and make the breaks in the film motivated breaks, unlike the TV show where they are dictated by the commercials."

Nelson's especially pleased by the opportunity to widen the show's scope. "The TV show is basically the same thing as *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* [the kiddie puppet show from the 1950s]. You point the camera at this little stage and we do things around it. For the film, we were able to have the camera anywhere we wanted. We also had special effects. They're not *incredibly* special, but we were at least able to do them, and we were able to put more action in it. You can't really sustain a scene on television, you can only do little vignettes. For the big screen, you can write special effects without having to worry about whether or not you can do it."

Of course, the core idea of *MST3K* is that Mike and his robot pals are being forced to watch a series of terrible films. So how does *This Island Earth*, revered in SF circles, fit in?

Nelson is brave enough to raise doubts about *This Island Earth*'s classic status. "It's a classic in its influence and, for its time, the design and the special effects were quite good. But the story is not classic at all. Any time I've told someone to take a second look at the film, they come back and say, 'Oh yeah, it's not very good.'"

Like many films that followed it, *TIE* concerns a group of astronauts drawn to a mysterious planet to find they've been duped by

aliens. Nelson observes that one big problem is the film's lead character.

"You have a hero who doesn't do anything heroic during the whole film," laughs Nelson. "He's just sort of an observer. At one point, the heroine is being chased by a large monster and all he does is tell her to run. That's his entire contribution to the film's action: 'Run, Ruth, Run!' She runs, and the monster dies on its own. He's an inactive action hero."

To allow for the wraparound, *This Island Earth* had to be cut. "The film is actually quite long," says Nelson, "so we had to edit it heavily, but we put a lot of thought into it. Even if we weren't there making comments, the movie would be better with our editing. At points the film becomes so ponderous. The way it plays now, which is quite a bit shorter, it moves along much faster, and is more exciting."

Of course, Nelson's opinion of the film may be colored by overexposure. For the television show, the cast throw around ideas while watching a movie seven or eight times. For the feature, Nelson esti-



mates that he sat through the film at least sixty times!

Much of 1995 was dedicated to the crafting of the film, as well as the preparation of a tie-in book (*The MST3K Amazing Colossal Episode Guide*, from Bantam) and a CD-ROM, all hand-crafted by the Best Brains writing staff (all the folks mentioned earlier, plus Paul Chaplin). As a result, the troupe had a short season of episodes last year, and neglected to arrange a Minneapolis fan convention — an annual tradition to be renewed this fall, with a third live show promised.

Despite all of this good news, 1995 dawned with a dark shadow falling over the Satellite of Love, when Comedy Central's lawyer told Best Brains' agent that there would be no new episodes of *MST3K* in 1995. In fan circles, news spread like wildfire that Comedy Central had canceled the show, and outraged reactions ensued.

Nelson opines that the cable channel had



Photo: Michael Kertiz / Granam Pictures

discovered that their 126 episodes of the series were eminently re-runnable, with no further production costs; Mallon suggests that a new regime at Comedy Central wanted to make its own mark with "fresh" programming. The theories are not mutually exclusive; it does seem obvious that the cable channel prefers being associated with their heavily promoted show *Politically Incorrect* — a pretentious coffee-table-book of a show — to *MST3K*, which is more of an anarchic comic book; something adults don't read in public, no matter that critics hail its wit and verve.

At this writing, rumors are flying about a reconciliation between the network and Best Brains. Mallon maintains silence about the rumors, though he promises to make a detailed announcement about the continuation of the show before this issue sees the newsstands.

"When we started out doing this show for next-to-no money, the saving grace of that deal is that we own it. Comedy Central can't cancel this show, because we have the right to continue it in any form, through any medium we want," Mallon suggests that he is even prepared to sell videotapes directly to the fans registered with Best Brains' *MST3K* Information Club, where the membership rolls now exceed 60,000 (free membership: *MST3K* Information Club, P.O. Box 5325, Hopkins, Minnesota 55343).

Continued on page 70

Celebrating a master of horror whose classic films relied on shadows, not special effects.

BY LAWRENCE TUCKER

VAL LEWTON'S MOVIES ARE TODAY more revered than watched. As the producer of such 1940's horror classics as *Cat People*, *I Walked with a Zombie*, *The Leopard Man*, *Isle of the Dead*, and other low-budget fare, Lewton's name has come to represent a particular style of horror — restrained, literate, and relatively subtle — that relies more on mood than on monsters, more on shadows than on special effects,

and more on suggestion than on explicit violence. It is a style that is highly praised by film historians, horror aficionados, and critics, but that is less popular with a public raised on *The Exorcist*, *Alien*, *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, and *Night of the Living Dead*.



Wilfrid Walter as blind killer Jake, in Dark Eyes of London, one of the films detailed in Human Monsters: The Bizarre Psychology of Movie Villains.

RIGHT: A poster for one of Val Lewton's horror classics.

When Paul Schrader's remake of *Cat People* came out in 1982, I recall, many critics denounced its dependence on nudity, SFX, and gore; they preferred — or said they did — Lewton's 1942 black-and-white original. But if most video-store habitués were polled as to which version they wanted to rent again and again, the one in which Simone Simon's visit to a pet shop leaves the animals screeching in terror (a nice scene, to be sure) or the one in which Ed Begley Jr., gets his arm ripped off by a panther and Nastassia Kinski prowls naked through

the grass, I suspect they'd opt for the latter.

Yet in its day, as Edmund G. Bansak demonstrates in *Fearing the Dark: The Val Lewton Career* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 579 pp, hardcover, \$45), the original *Cat People* was a genuine hit, "a national phenomenon" that played to "sellout crowds" and rescued its tight-fisted studio, RKO, from financial ruin; costing less than \$135,000 to make, it went on to gross more than \$4 million. Bansak, whose book is clearly a labor of love — an exhaustive, richly detailed film-by-film biography that makes the case for Lewton as one of "B"-moviedom's most influential figures — quotes a 1946 *Life* interview in which Lewton summed up his credo: "I'll tell you a secret: If you make the screen dark enough, the mind's eye will read anything into it We're great ones for dark patches The horror addicts will populate the darkness with more horrors than all the horror writers in Hollywood could think of."

Like other "B" producers, Lewton had to contend with similarly limited budgets on all his films; and Bansak reveals that, in most cases, he was also forced to work with the lurid titles that the studio's front office had already cooked up. *Cat People*, *The Curse of the Cat People*, *I Walked with a Zombie*, *The Leopard Man*, *The Seventh Victim* — all these titles were decreed by RKO before any stories were concocted (or adapted) to go with them. As Bansak observes, it was, for Lewton, "a task tantamount to coordinating an entire suit of clothes to fit the choice of tie clip."

In the case of *The Curse of the Cat People*, the fit between title and subject was a particularly loose one — to the movie's misfortune. Because RKO had had a hit with *Cat People*, it demanded a sequel, or at least something it could market as one. Lewton, as the book makes clear, accommodated the studio chiefs, but only so far, penning an original treatment that had virtually nothing to do with



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the earlier film (though it resurrected several of its characters) and populating the new one with various feline images — ornaments, taxidermy, and so forth — that are completely extraneous to the plot. In truth, in case you haven't seen it, *Curse* is a delicate, dreamy, somewhat Disneyesque fantasy about a young girl with an imaginary (or supernatural) playmate who, in a moment of danger, becomes her protector. It's a lovely film, exquisitely shot, but it is so far removed from its title that, on first viewing, you're apt to be disappointed or even infuriated. "When *The Curse of the Cat People* was released," says Bansak, "its title was declared ill-chosen by every film reviewer in the nation; and, yet, the film itself was heralded by scores of movie critics and caught the attention of universities, psychological circles, and parent groups." There's one thing we can be thankful for, at least. Bad as the title is, it's a lot better than the one Lewton himself wanted: *Amy and Her Friend*.

Sympathetic to Lewton without being blind to his weaknesses, Bansak is a painstakingly thorough historian who even gives us critiques of Lewton's early fiction (he wrote nearly a dozen quickie novels before heading for Hollywood), including a short story, "The Bagheeta," that appeared in a 1930 *Weird Tales*. Set in Lewton's native Ukraine and inspired in part by his lifelong fear of cats, the tale is a hint of themes to come, for it involves a woman who shape-shifts into a savage leopard.

So thorough is Bansak, in fact, that *Fearing the Dark* has been taken to task — by my favorite genre critic, *Filmfax*'s David J. Hogan, no less — for giving us more than we want: specifically, by providing too many unnecessary chapters on Lewton's filmmaking contemporaries and disciples, including dozens of pages on, of all people, Orson Welles. Hogan is probably right; there's a lot of padding here. Still, when it comes to books about film, particularly when they're written as well as this one, I tend to subscribe to the theory that more is better.

Lewton died in 1951, not yet 47 years old. Today most of his work may seem rather dated, but the man's unusual vision lives on in intelligent, atmospheric horror films such as *Curse of the Demon* and *The Haunting*, the one directed by Jacques Tourneur, the other by Robert Wise. Both directors had worked under Val Lewton.

Human Monsters: The Bizarre Psychology of Movie Villains by George E. Turner and Michael H. Price (Northampton, MA: Kitchen Sink Press, 208 pp., PB, \$16.95).

The subtitle of this book is deceptive; it is neither a study of psychology nor an examination of evil. Rather, it's an illustrated guide to sixty-five colorful "B"-movies of the 1930s and '40s (including *The Leopard Man* and *The Seventh Victim*), complete with production histories, casts, plot synopses, and affectionate, knowledgeable commentaries. Each

movie receives three or four pages, making the book something of a sequel to Turner and Price's earlier collaboration, *Forgotten Horrors: Early Talkie Chillers from Poverty Row*, a useful reference work that belongs on every genre buff's bookshelf. If you want to know the story of *A Shriek in the Night* (1933) or *A Face in the Fog* (1936), find yourself a copy of *Forgotten Horrors*. If you want the lowdown on *Murders in the Zoo* (1933), in which Lionel Atwill feeds his wife to the crocodiles, or *The Ape* (1940), in which Boris Karloff dons a gorilla suit to commit a string of murders, check out *Human Monsters*.

Budding filmmakers reading this book, and who also read the Val Lewton biography reviewed above, will find themselves confronted by a sort of Ten Commandments of Horror, a set of ten axioms — by two hardened Hollywood veterans — that both complement and clash with one another. The Bansak book quotes Universal producer George Waggner, best known for the Lon Chaney, Jr., vehicles *The Wolf Man*, *The Ghost of Frankenstein*, and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, on his "seven-ingredient recipe for horror films: (1) They must be once-upon-a-time tales. (2) They must be believable in characterization. (3) They must have unusual technical effects. (4) Besides the major monster, there must be a secondary character of weird appearance, such as Igor. (5) They must confess right off that the show is a horror film. (6) They must include a pish-tush character to express the normal skepticism of the audience. (7) They must be based on some pseudo-scientific premise." Contrast this with the "three fundamental theories" of horror films that Val Lewton espouses in an RKO press release, quoted in the Turner-Price book: "First is that the audience will people any patch of darkness with more horror, suspense, and frightfulness than the most imaginative writer could ever dream up. Second, and most important, is the fact that extraordinary things can happen to very ordinary people. And third is to use the beauty of setting and camerawork to ward off audience laughter at situations which, when less beautifully photographed, might seem ludicrous."

That last piece of advice seems applicable not only to horror films, but to horror fiction as well. Style counts; it counts in horror more, perhaps, than in any other genre. While science fiction, in print or on screen, may often get by on a particularly novel idea, and while mystery relies largely on an intricate plot, the style of a horror tale or film is crucial; it must be insidiously persuasive, skillfully orchestrating suspense, building up atmosphere by subtle accretion, one dab at a time. The author is trying, above all, to create a mood — and, in the process, to convince the viewer or reader of something he knows just isn't so. The major obstacle, as a fantasy critic once lamented, is that "in a fundamental way, this stuff is ridiculous." The joy of good movies is that they make us forget this fact. □



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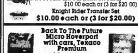
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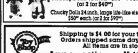
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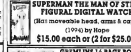
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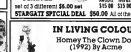
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The Year That Everything Changed

IN TEN YEARS OR SO, when people try to pinpoint exactly when it was that everything in the world changed, it may be that they'll decide that it was late in 1996.

A part of the reasoning for this assertion is detailed in Melissa Perenson's "Infinite Channels" column in this issue. If you haven't been reading computer journals closely, you are probably not aware that various hardware manufacturers will be encouraging people to make a gift of the World Wide Web this Christmas, in the first real effort to make computing devices that are as simple to use, and nearly as ubiquitous, as the telephone, at a price that even the computer-savvy might find attractive. Assuming this strategy works, and millions flock to the Web, there's going to be some interesting fallout. People are going to find out that the Web is slow — in fact, the influx of new users will slow it even more — but that shouldn't be a problem for long. Assuming these products launch well enough to actually overflow the net, the computer industry will be sufficiently invested in this strategy to do what has to be done to make it work: create partnerships with the telephone companies to make the Web faster and capable of carrying a wider variety of content to a greater number of people.

But that's only a part of what is beginning to unfold this year. Another potential revolution, one you may have already heard about, is the Digital Versatile Disc. The DVD (which originally meant Digital Video Disk until it was realized that CD-ROMs and Laserdiscs are also digital and carry video) will be introduced later this year. The new CD format will carry seven times the information carried by today's CD audio disc or CD-ROM — just enough to contain 135 minutes of video at better-than-VHS picture quality, with a CD-quality soundtrack. Although the first players will be too expensive for casual purchase, it's expected that DVD will replace audio CDs, CD-ROMs, and VHS tape over the next few years. And, during that time, technology that layers two tracks on each side of the disc will upgrade the DVD standard to a maximum capacity twenty-four times that of the standard CD — on a disc of the same size as the CDs of today.

All that storage space will be used to carry hybrid products, so that the same disc will be sending data to your music system, your

television, and to your computer. And that brings us to a third revolutionary change.

Within the next year, we'll see the beginning of the end of the division between the computer and the television set, as some computers begin to appear packaged as stackable components that will slide nicely between the VCR and the receiver as part of your home theater system. Thanks to DVD, such computers, as well as existing computer models that contain television circuitry, will finally make sense to purchasers who have no desire to trolley a disc of diverse formats between the home computer and the television set. At the same time, television manufacturers are themselves waking up to this trend, and putting television sets that will run DVD program data, and even browse the Web, on the drawing board.

So far, we've replaced your computer, your television set, and your music system. So what else is there?

Your phone. That'll be the next to go. Most human beings, or so the plan goes, are going to have access to a broad-band, two-way connection to the Net, capable of sending as well as receiving a wide variety of content through a vast and powerful network. What, then, would be the point of having a separate wire, and a separate device, for simple voice communications? "Internet Phone" software is already commonplace, allowing one-to-one voice communications at global distances via a standard, modem-equipped, home computer and an Internet connection — with no long-distance charges. The only major criticism of Internet Phone software is that both parties must be on-line simultaneously to make and receive such calls. It's a short-sighted objection; the popular Internet services are now priced at around \$20 per month for unlimited access time. Long-distance calling may continue to grow cheaper, but it will never beat unlimited global calling and video conferencing for the price of some inexpensive hardware and a twenty-four-hour open line to the Internet.

I'm not ancient enough to remember the days when people didn't have television sets, but it's clear enough to any thinking person that video has changed our lives beyond what anyone imagined during the first tentative experiments. But, compared with what's on the horizon, it's a flash in the pan.

— Ed Flixman

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BARB WIRE
Continued from page 56

Although I may have made an audible groan when Stradley mentioned their forthcoming title *Aliens vs. Batman*, the editor was quick to add, "It's a really good story, we found a great way to get them to Earth." And, after a brief pause, added the clincher: "Bernie Wrightson is illustrating that one." Bernie Wrightson drawing the aliens and Batman? OK, reserve me a copy.

Of course, *Star Wars* titles will comprise a major share of Dark Horse's business this summer, as the "Shadows of the Empire" merchandising effort, and the continued excitement surrounding the new and refurbished *Star Wars* films, build. "Shadows," set during the time between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, is no mere "ancillary product." Written by *Judge Dredd* co-creator John Wagner, and illustrated by the team of Kilian Plunkett and P. Craig Russell, the comic is a linchpin of the entire campaign, as, along with several forthcoming novels, it will carry the original *Star Wars* narrative that will unite the cross-merchandising campaign.

Richardson himself could not have guessed that such an ambitious roster would ever emerge from Dark Horse when he first started publishing black-and-white comics, a few thousand issues at a time, less than a decade ago. But, he says, he always knew that he would be doing something like the work he does now.

Richardson's first publishing enterprise was a "newspaper" he developed at the age of ten. "I used to handwrite it and draw my own comic strips," he recalls. "There was this local paper that used to wrap its bundles in newsprint paper; I used to collect it to print my magazines on. Then I would usually make about seven copies and I would sell it to the adults in the neighborhood who thought it was neat enough to buy."

It's no doubt the same creative urge that compels Richardson to retain an active involvement in all of Dark Horse's comic book projects, as well as feature-film development.

"I think one of the reasons Dark Horse is successful with film is that we believe in the subject matter," he says. "A lot of times you see material that's taken from comic books, and the people producing the films don't have total faith in the property itself, as it stands. You see indecision. Look at *The Shadow*. At times it was more like a *Thin Man* movie, focusing on the relationship between The Shadow and Margo; and other times it was very serious. It even stretched into that Batman, campy television series feel. You never knew what they were going for. Other movies that haven't done well I think usually come from people not really taking the subject matter seriously. I think we come up with stories for our characters, go for it, and don't apologize for it afterward." □

MST3H
Continued from page 65

With the continuation of the show assured (one way or another), there remains the task of finding material to be *MSTed*. The field is immediately narrowed by the fact that a movie needs not to be merely bad, but must offer absurd hooks to support the one-liners and pointed observations of Mike and his robot pals.

"The search sometimes gets harder," Nelson admits. "There are far too many films from the 'rocket ship goes into space' genre where they end up on a strange planet and meet some strange aliens; those are old for us. But there are some unexplored things. Usually we like films by filmmakers who are quite serious, and aspiring for a lot, but never quite make it. Those are the funniest to play with."

The show has largely concentrated on films before the '70s, for a couple of reasons. "The problem with the low-budget films from the '70s and later is the violence and nudity," says Nelson. "It rules out most of them, though we have had a few more recent sci-fi movies on that we were able to edit for the show, like *Robot Holocaust* and *Death Stalker*. We even did *The Incredible Melting Man*, which had makeup by Rick Baker [done prior to his multiple Oscars, of course]. It was violent in its own way, but it was comically gross."

The other problem is price. "Sometimes a movie is no better than another, but it just costs too much," says Nelson. "Some people think their films still have value, even though you never see them shown on TV or cable or anywhere. That's another reason why we tend to cover films that are made with incredibly low, low budgets."

Nelson agrees with Mallon that a large share of their success stems from their control of the show, shot far from L.A. and wholly owned by Best Brains, Inc. "We slide under radar and no one seems to care," says Nelson. "We have our own creative control and to me that's everything. A show has to have a point of view, and that point of view has to be controlled by the people who make it. If you start stirring it up with other people's opinions it gets too messy."

Mallon and company expect to maintain similar independence as they pursue a second series project, still hush-hush, in the works for Universal Television. "What's most important is keeping this group together, and not joining the pool of people out there in Hollywood," Nelson says, perhaps thinking of the talents that have left the show and are still knocking on doors. "To me it's a little depressing. You start from zero again."

"This group, even though it's a very small show, has a reputation that affords us a tiny foot in the door to do the things we want. I would rather have our little lives in the Midwest with our little TV show than trying to throw us into that huge feeding frenzy in Hollywood." □



MAY • JUNE

U.S. PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE

DAYTIME

TIME	Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:00	Informational	Informational	Informational
6:30			
7:00	Animation Station: The Fantastic Voyage		
7:30	Terrahawks		
8:00	Back to the Future/Galaxy High		
8:30	Transformers/New Adven. of Giganter***		
9:00	Lost in Space	Saturday Anime (movie)	Mad Scientists' Kids
9:30			The Anti-Gravity Room
10:00	Beauty and the Beast		Sci-Fi Buzz
10:30			C-Net Central
11:00	Dark Shadows	The Anti-Gravity Room	Inside Space
11:30	Dark Shadows	The Odyssey	Mysteries, Magic, Miracles
Noon	Sci-Fi Series Collection	My Secret Identity	Space: 1999
12:30		Dracula: The Series	
1:00	Alfred Hitchcock Presents	Swamp Thing	Starman
1:30	Tales From the Darkside	Swamp Thing	
2:00	Night Gallery	Moonlight Matinee	U.F.O.
2:30	Ray Bradbury Theater		
3:00	Buck Rogers/Battlestar Galactica/Galactica 1980*		Moonlight Matinee
3:30			
4:00	The Incredible Hulk	Radiation Theater	
4:30			
5:00	The Bionic Woman		Radiation Theater
5:30			
6:00	The Six Million Dollar Man	Amazing Stories	
6:30		The Odyssey	

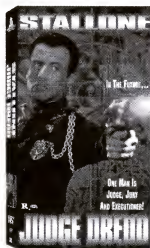
EVENING

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone/Soup
7:30	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	C-Net Central	Monsters	Myst/Mag/Mir
8:00	Forever Knight	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Kolchak Nightstalker	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
8:30					Film		The Odyssey
9:00	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**		Alien Nation
9:30							
10:00	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th: Series	Sci-Fi Buzz	Max Headroom	War of the Worlds
10:30					Inside Space		

LATE NIGHT

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
11:00	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone	Twilight Zone
11:30	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	Monsters	C-Net Central	Monsters	Myst/Mag/Mir
Midnight	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Quantum Leap	Kolchak Nightstalker	Sci-Fi Feature	Amazing Stories
12:30							The Odyssey
1:00	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**	SF Series Collect.**		Alien Nation
1:30							
2:00	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th: Series	Friday 13th: Series	Sci-Fi Buzz	Max Headroom	War of the
2:30					Inside Space		Worlds
3:00	Informational	Informational	Informational	Thriller	Thriller	Thriller	Tales/Darkside
3:30							Informational

All programming shown Eastern Standard Time. Please adapt for your local time zone. Titles in red denote original programming. All programming subject to change. This schedule is effective through 6/30/96. *Buck Rogers, Battlestar Galactica, and Galactica 1980 are shown in rotation. **Sci-Fi Movie airs one week per month. SF Series Collection titles for May are Future Cop and Planet of the Apes; For June, Something/Out There, Golden Years. ***Friday, 6:30 am: Anti-Gravity Room



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MAY-JUNE MOVIES AND SPECIALS ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

FRIDAY, MAY 3

5:00 p.m. The Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary, June Lockhart

SATURDAY, MAY 4

9:00 a.m. Demon City Shinjuku
1993, Science Fiction
2:00 p.m. The Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary, June Lockhart
4:00 p.m. Replikator
1994, Science Fiction, Ned Beatty, Michael St. Gerard
7:00 p.m. The Abyss-The Special Edition
1989, Science Fiction, Ed Harris, Mary Mastrantonio
11:00 p.m. The Abyss-The Special Edition
1989, Science Fiction, Ed Harris, Mary Mastrantonio

3:30 a.m. The Man Who Fell to Earth
1976, Science Fiction, David Bowie, Candy Clark

SUNDAY, MAY 5

1:00 p.m. The Fantasy Worlds of Irwin Allen
1995, Documentary, June Lockhart
3:00 p.m. Subspecies
1991, Horror, Michael Watson
5:00 p.m. Bloodstone: Subspecies 2
1993, Horror, Anders Hove

MONDAY, MAY 6

9:00 p.m. Parts: The Clonus Horror
1983, Horror, Timothy Donnelly, Dick Sargent
1:00 a.m. Parts: The Clonus Horror
1983, Horror, Timothy Donnelly, Dick Sargent

TUESDAY, MAY 7

9:00 p.m. Man Without a Body
1958, Science Fiction, Robert Hutton, George Coulouris
1:00 a.m. Man Without a Body
1958, Science Fiction, Robert Hutton, George Coulouris

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8

9:00 p.m. The Crawling Eye
1960, Science Fiction, Forrest Tucker, Laurence Payne
1:00 a.m. The Crawling Eye
1960, Science Fiction, Forrest Tucker, Laurence Payne

THURSDAY, MAY 9

9:00 p.m. The Thing that Couldn't Die
1958, Horror, Andra Martin
1:00 a.m. The Thing that Couldn't Die
1958, Horror, Andra Martin

SATURDAY, MAY 11

9:00 a.m. Dominion Tank Police-Part 1
1992, Anime*



Ashe (Ian Holm) inspects the "face hugger" attached to Kane (John Hurt) in *Alien*.

2:00 p.m. Plague
1978, Science Fiction, Daniel Pilon, Kate Reid
4:00 p.m. The Odyssey
1992, Fantasy, Illya Woloshyn
8:00 p.m. Journey to the Center of the Earth
1959, Science Fiction, James Mason, Arlene Dahl
12:00 a.m. Journey to the Center of the Earth
1959, Science Fiction, James Mason, Arlene Dahl
4:00 a.m. Plague
1978, Science Fiction, Daniel Pilon, Kate Reid

SUNDAY, MAY 12

3:00 p.m. Peggy Sue Got Married
1986, Fantasy, Kathleen Turner, Nicolas Cage
5:00 p.m. The Princess Bride
1987, Comedy, Cary Elwes

SATURDAY, MAY 18

9:00 a.m. Dominion Tank Police-Part 2*
1992, Anime
2:00 p.m. The Last Child
1971, Science Fiction, Michael Cole, Janet Margolin
3:30 p.m. Robinson Crusoe on Mars
1964, Science Fiction, Adam West, Paul Mantee

3:30 a.m. Aelita: Queen of Mars
1924, Science Fiction, Yulia Solintseva, Nikolai Batalov

SUNDAY, MAY 19

3:00 p.m. Riding with Death
1976, Science Fiction, Ben Murphy, Andrew Prine

THURSDAY, MAY 23

7:30 p.m. Making of Jurassic Park: The Attraction
1996, Documentary
11:30 p.m. Making of Jurassic Park: The Attraction
1996, Documentary

SATURDAY, MAY 25

9:00 a.m. Odin: Photon Space Sailor Starlight
1992, Anime
12:00 p.m. Making of Jurassic

Park: The Attraction
1996, Documentary
2:00 p.m. Wizards of the Lost Kingdom
1985, Fantasy, Bo Svenson
7:30 p.m. Making of Jurassic Park: The Attraction
1996, Documentary
8:00 p.m. Trapped in Space
1993, Science Fiction, Jack Wagner, Brad Douriff
11:30 p.m. Making of Jurassic Park: The Attraction
1996, Documentary
12:00 a.m. Trapped in Space
1993, Science Fiction, Jack Wagner, Brad Douriff

3:30 a.m. Deathwatch
1982, Science Fiction, Romy Schneider, Harvey Keitel

SUNDAY, MAY 26

3:00 p.m. The Puppetmaster
1989, Horror, Paul Lemat
5:00 p.m. Trapped in Space
1993, Science Fiction, Jack Wagner, Brad Douriff
8:00 p.m. Making of Jurassic Park: The Attraction
1996, Documentary
12:00 a.m. Making of Jurassic Park: The Attraction
1996, Documentary

MONDAY, MAY 27

9:00 a.m. The Atomic Submarine
1959, Science Fiction, Arthur Franz, Dick Foran
10:30 a.m. Satan's Triangle
1975, Horror, Kim Novak
12:00 p.m. It Came From Beneath the Sea
1955, Science Fiction, Kenneth Tobey, Faith Domergue
2:00 p.m. Jaws 3
1982, Suspense, Louis Gossett Jr., Bess Armstrong
4:00 p.m. Orca
1977, Horror, Richard Harris
6:00 p.m. The Abyss-Theatrical Version
1989, Science Fiction, Ed Harris, Mary Mastrantonio
9:00 p.m. Jaws 3
1982, Suspense, Louis Gossett Jr., Bess Armstrong
11:00 p.m. Orca
1977, Horror, Richard Harris
1:00 a.m. It Came From Beneath the Sea
1955, Science Fiction, Kenneth Tobey, Faith Domergue

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

9:00 a.m. Project A-KO*
1992, Anime
2:00 a.m. Hi Honey, I'm Dead
1991, Comedy, Catherine Hicks, Curtis Armstrong
4:00 p.m. Trapped in Space
1993, Science Fiction, Jack Wagner, Brad Douriff

MAY-JUNE MOVIES AND SPECIALS ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL

8:00 p.m. Alien*

1979, Horror, Sigourney Weaver, Tom Skerritt
12:00 a.m. Alien*
1979, Horror, Sigourney Weaver, Tom Skerritt
4:00 a.m. Hi Honey, I'm Dead
1991, Comedy, Catherine Hicks, Curtis Armstrong

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

3:00 p.m. Howling 5: The Rebirth
1989, Horror, Philip Davis
5:00 p.m. Howling 6: The Freaks
1990, Horror, Brendan Hughes

MONDAY, JUNE 3

9:00 p.m. The Incredible Hulk Returns
1988, Science Fiction, Bill Bixby
1:00 a.m. The Incredible Hulk Returns
1988, Science Fiction, Bill Bixby

TUESDAY, JUNE 4

9:00 p.m. Captain America 2
1979, Superhero, Reb Brown
1:00 a.m. Captain America 2
1979, Superhero, Reb Brown

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

9:00 p.m. Dr. Strange
1978, Superhero, Peter Hooten
1:00 a.m. Dr. Strange
1978, Superhero, Peter Hooten

THURSDAY, JUNE 6

9:00 p.m. The Amazing Spiderman: The Deadly Dust
1977, Superhero, Nicholas Hammond, Lisa Eilbacher
1:00 a.m. The Amazing Spiderman: The Deadly Dust
1977, Superhero, Nicholas Hammond, Lisa Eilbacher

FRIDAY, JUNE 7

9:00 a.m. Lensman
1989, Anime
2:00 p.m. Mandroid
1993, Science Fiction, Brian Cousins, Jane Caldwell
3:30 p.m. The Fury
1978, Horror, Kirk Douglas
8:00 p.m. Cyberjack
1995, Science Fiction, Michael Dudikoff, Brian James
12:00 a.m. Cyberjack
1995, Science Fiction, Michael Dudikoff, Brian James

SATURDAY, JUNE 8

9:00 a.m. Lensman
1989, Anime
2:00 p.m. Mandroid
1993, Science Fiction, Brian Cousins, Jane Caldwell
3:30 p.m. The Fury
1978, Horror, Kirk Douglas
8:00 p.m. Cyberjack
1995, Science Fiction, Michael Dudikoff, Brian James
12:00 a.m. Cyberjack
1995, Science Fiction, Michael Dudikoff, Brian James

SUNDAY, JUNE 9

2:00 p.m. Rosemary's Baby
1968, Horror, Mia Farrow
5:00 p.m. Cyberjack
1995, Science Fiction, Michael Dudikoff, Brian James

MONDAY, JUNE 10

6:00 p.m. On a Collision Course with Earth
1995, Science Fact, Mike Farrell

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12

8:00 p.m. On a Collision Course with Earth

1995, Science Fact, Mike Farrell
12:00 a.m. On a Collision Course with Earth
1995, Science Fact, Mike Farrell

FRIDAY, JUNE 14

9:00 a.m. On a Collision Course with Earth
1995, Science Fact, Mike Farrell

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

9:00 a.m. Project A-KO: Battles 1 & 2*
1993, Anime
2:30 p.m. Trancers 3: Deth Lives
1992, Science Fiction, Tim Thomerson, Helen Hunt
4:00 p.m. Cyberjack
1995, Science Fiction, Michael Dudikoff, Brian James
8:00 p.m. Nightmares
1983, Horror, Christina Raines
12:00 a.m. Nightmares
1983, Horror, Christina Raines

4:00 a.m. Dr. Cyclops
1940, Science Fiction, Albert Dekker, Janice Logan

SUNDAY, JUNE 16

2:00 p.m. Planet of the Apes
1968, Science Fiction, Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall
4:30 p.m. Back to the Future 3
1990, Adventure, Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

9:00 a.m. 8 Man After
1993, Anime
2:00 p.m. The Deadly Bees
1967, Science Fiction, Frank Finlay, Suzanne Leigh
4:00 p.m. Arcade
1993, Science Fiction, Megan Ward, Peter Billingsley
8:00 p.m. Guyver 2: The Dark Hero
1994, Science Fiction, David Hayter, Kathy Christopherson
12:00 a.m. Guyver 2: The Dark Hero
1994, Science Fiction, David Hayter, Kathy Christopherson
4:00 a.m. The Incredible Shrinking Man
1957, Science Fiction, Grant Williams, Randy Stuart

SUNDAY, JUNE 23

3:00 p.m. Robot Wars
1993, Science Fiction, Don Michael Paul
4:30 p.m. Guyver 2: The Dark Hero
1994, Science Fiction, David Hayter, Kathy Christopherson
7:00 p.m. The Dark Hero
1994, Science Fiction, David Hayter, Kathy Christopherson
9:00 p.m. Planet of the Apes
1968, Science Fiction, Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall
1:00 a.m. Planet of the Apes
1968, Science Fiction, Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall

TUESDAY, JUNE 25

9:00 p.m. Beneath the Planet of the Apes
1970, Science Fiction, James Franciscus, Maurice Evans

1:00 a.m. Beneath the Planet of the Apes
1970, Science Fiction, James Franciscus, Maurice Evans

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26

9:00 p.m. Escape from the Planet of the Apes
1971, Science Fiction, Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter
1:00 a.m. Escape from the Planet of the Apes
1971, Science Fiction, Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter

THURSDAY, JUNE 27

7:30 p.m. Making of Independence Day
1996, Documentary
9:00 p.m. Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
1972, Science Fiction, Roddy McDowall, Ricardo Montalban
11:30 p.m. Making of Independence Day
1996, Documentary
1:00 a.m. Conquest of the Planet of the Apes
1972, Science Fiction, Roddy McDowall, Ricardo Montalban

FRIDAY, JUNE 28

9:00 p.m. Battle for the Planet of the Apes
1973, Science Fiction, Roddy McDowall, Natalie Trundy
1:00 a.m. Battle for the Planet of the Apes
1973, Science Fiction, Roddy McDowall, Natalie Trundy

SATURDAY, JUNE 29

9:00 a.m. Robot Carnival
1991, Anime
12:00 p.m. Making of Independence Day
1996, Documentary
2:00 p.m. The Guyver
1991, Science Fiction, Mark Hamill, Vivian Wu
4:00 p.m. Guyver 2: The Dark Hero
1994, Science Fiction, David Hayter, Kathy Christopherson
8:00 p.m. Wedlock
1994, Science Fiction, Rutger Hauer, Mimi Rodgers
12:00 a.m. Wedlock
1994, Science Fiction, Rutger Hauer, Mimi Rodgers

SUNDAY, JUNE 30

3:00 a.m. Rosemary's Baby
1968, Horror, Mia Farrow
5:00 p.m. Invasion of the Body Snatchers
1956, Science Fiction, Kevin McCarthy, Dana Winter
8:00 p.m. Making of Independence Day
1996, Documentary
12:00 a.m. Making of Independence Day
1996, Documentary

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INFINITE CHANNELS

Continued from page 32

Computer can provide different functions," Ellison elaborated. "It can be a desktop computer or a laptop computer, it can be a screen telephone or an interactive TV set-top box, or a personal digital assistant with integrated two-way pager. The Network Computer is an architecture for a family of network appliances."

Ellison indicated in his speech that he expects there to be a broad market for network computers. "We wanted to design the Network Computer to be a consumer device as well as a business device, so we have a multimedia kit that goes with it. High-quality speakers, a CD or DVD (digital video disk) player, an integrated AM/FM radio, and then you plug the NC into the multimedia kit."

Oracle plans on shipping its first Network Computer in the United States by September; an Intel-based version is expected by year's end. In an effort to create an open-market standard, Oracle is offering their Network Computer to any manufacturer for a small fee; the company is also working on distribution deals with telephone companies and Internet service providers. The Network Computer, says Ellison, "is based on standards like HTML (hypertext markup language), MPEG (motion picture experts group) video, and HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol). This is because it can be used across a variety of networks and hardware platforms."

While that may seem like a mouthful of alphabet soup, Ellison has pinpointed the difference between yesterday's dumb terminal and tomorrow's Internet appliance. The growth of the Web has accelerated the development of protocols, standards, languages, and, with Java, applications that function across a wide range of computers. Like a Tower of Babel in reverse, the Internet has spawned a global language with a power of its own that the new machines will be designed to tap.

The prototype built by Oracle sits in a two-pound case approximately 10 inches by 10 inches square, and 2 inches in height, with several LED status lights and a power button on the front. The device includes a 50-MHz ARM 7500 RISC processor (a processor created for use with TV set-top boxes, and which runs about as fast as a 486), 8-MB of memory, a standard PC card slot for transporting downloaded data and applications, Ethernet support, a 28.8-Kbps modem, and a keyboard. The device runs on a proprietary operating system, NC OS, jointly developed by Oracle and England-based Acorn Computer. Included is a Web browser, support for 16-bit audio, and 30-frames-per-second video; a suite of Java applications is being developed to offer compatibility with Microsoft Word, Excel, and other Microsoft file formats. The device, which was manufactured for less than

\$400, attaches to a TV set, and has an option for a local storage device.

The baseline market appeal of Internet appliances will be toward technophobes who've thus far stayed as far away from the home computing phenomenon as possible, and yet they want to have plug-and-play access to the Internet. The appeal won't stretch too far for home users, though, if the device doesn't offer a way to save data locally on a floppy disk, and if the device doesn't support the latest and greatest versions of software available for Web surfing. After all, how many of us were already using the Netscape 2.0 beta long before it was actually available as "final code"? Impatient users may become disgruntled if the software they want to use is not speedily available from, let alone compatible with, their network.

There's also the issue of time. An advantage and curse to the network computer is the fact that you're downloading your software from the server every time you turn on your system. Oracle's NC OS amounts to 800K — about a five-minute wait each time you switch on the system, even if you're using a 28.8-Kbps modem with no network lag and clean telephone lines.

Another challenge that waits in the wings is that a \$500 - \$700 Internet-only PC will have to prove that it offers advantage in speed and ease of use over yesterday's 486 PC systems that you can now get for \$800 to \$1,000, and frequently less. Consumers are certain to reap the benefits when the first low-cost browsing boxes appear; PC manufacturers are certain to respond with an equally seductive combination of price plus performance.

And there's one more runner in this race, a dark horse that could prove to be a winner. Game machines have already won wide acceptance as "computer appliances," and a new generation of machines boasting dedicated chips for graphic handling — designed to optimize 3-D action games like *Doom* — may be a perfect fit for the emerging standards for 3-D graphics on the Web. In mid-May, Philips Electronics plans to introduce an Internet-access package for use with its \$299 CD-i interactive media players. The package, which offers a modem, a connector cable, and a CD containing a Mosaic-like Web browser, is being tested in Europe and will sell for about \$245. Although Sega, Sony, and Nintendo are keeping their Internet strategies under tight wraps, most observers agree that it's only a matter of time before the popular browsers begin to appear on video game ROM cartridge and CD-ROM.

The Internet appliance is going to find a market; whether it will be the computing revolution envisioned by its prophets is yet to be seen. But this is one case where *Star Trek's* future technology may come to fruition sooner rather than later. The days of near-universal personal information terminals with pop-up display screens and access to a centralized computer may come sooner than you think. □

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Week, starting with *Parts: The Clonus Horror*, a cutting-edge medical chiller in which a treacherous government secretly plans to begin cloning the citizenry. It airs Monday, May 6, at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. Doctors can transplant hearts, so why not brains? *The Man Without A Body* stars Robert Hutton and George Coulouris. It airs May 7 at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m.

Don't blink. *The Crawling Eye* is loosed upon the world on May 8 at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. Also, a wizard's head is separated from his body, and he wants to get back together in *The Thing That Couldn't Die* which airs in the U.S. May 9 at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m.

Memorial Day, May 27, means an *Aquaphobia Marathon* on the Sci-Fi Channel in the Arctic Circle, and an *Atomic Submarine* will help in the investigation. This '50s favorite airs at 9 a.m. Next stop, *Satan's Triangle*, where the devil himself seems to be wreaking havoc in the lives of Kim Novak and Doug McClure after their small boat is shipwrecked off the Florida coast. It airs at 10:30 a.m. *It Came From Beneath the Sea*, and it's a giant octopus causing trouble in San Francisco. It airs at 12 p.m. A giant shark escapes from its tank at Sea World and it's up to Dennis Quaid and Bess Armstrong to save the day in *Jaws III*, airing at 2 p.m. and 9 p.m. It's a big mistake to anger a killer whale, which is just what happens in *Orca*, airing at 4 p.m. and 11 p.m. Deep-sea adventure awaits a group of salvage divers in *The Abyss*. This theatrical version airs at 6 p.m.

Adventure of comic proportions is on the agenda in June for U.S. viewers. *The Mighty Marvel Movie Marathon* begins June 3, with special movies airing at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. all week. Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno shake things up in *The Incredible Hulk Returns*. Reb Brown stars as *Captain America II* on June 4, followed by Sir John Mills as a sorcerer in *Dr. Strange* on June 5. *The Amazing Spider-Man: The Deadly Dust* on June 6 rounds out the week with Nicholas Hammond in the title role.

U.S. viewers can also tune in for a week-long festival of *Planet of the Apes* movies beginning Monday, June 24, with films airing daily at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. All five classics of simian cinema—*Planet of the Apes*, *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*, *Escape from the Planet of the Apes*, *Conquest of the Planet of the Apes*, and *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*—are featured.

Independence Day is shaping up to be the blockbuster hit of the summer, and the Sci-Fi Channel has the backstage scoop in *The Making of Independence Day*. U.S. viewers can catch this documentary on June 27 at 7:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m., June 29 at noon, and June 30 at 8 p.m. and 12 p.m. □

*Times of programs to be presented on the Sci-Fi Channel in the United States are listed ET. American viewers. Please adjust for your local airtime.



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Planet of the Apes

EACH MONTH, Sci-Fi Series Collection in the United States showcases unforgettable favorites and rarely seen gems from the genres of science fiction, fantasy, and classic horror. This month, the Sci-Fi Channel features *Planet of the Apes*.

"I actually enjoyed doing the *Planet of the Apes* series," Roddy McDowall told an interviewer in 1985. "And I was really sorry when it didn't last—it was a good show that never found its audience. I believe it would have worked, had it been on at 7 p.m. on a Saturday or a Sunday. But, as I only realized after the fact, the show was expected to pull audience away from *Sanford and Son*, which was a huge hit in its second season at the time. Obviously, it didn't beat *Sanford*, and it wasn't given a second chance."

McDowall's kind words for the 1974 CBS series can be best appreciated when one realizes that the show's failure had a negative effect on the actor's career, bringing his first prolonged show business slump since his film debut as a child actor in 1938. It was widely publicized that McDowall, generally regarded as a serious film actor, would play a recurring character in full ape makeup. While McDowall had also played an ape role in the 1968 *Planet of the Apes* film, that move was vindicated by the film's success. When the series was canceled after thirteen episodes, McDowall became an easy target for cheap comedy japes, usually made by people who had never seen an episode:

It wasn't just the Redd Fox comedy series that deprived *Planet of the Apes* of the audience that it deserved. There was also the fact that Twentieth Century Fox had started its feature series with an above-average SF film, and then proceeded to kill off its own market with a rapid-fire sequence of cut-rate sequels—five films in six years—culminating in the nearly unwatchable *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*, just a year before the series debut. No wonder, then, that it was difficult getting people to tune in.

In remolding the franchise into a television series, Twentieth Century Fox distilled the various plotlines of the films into a single concept that, like many dramatic series of the day, owed a major debt to the "man on the run" genre established by *The Fugitive*.

The first episode establishes the premise, as astronauts Alan Virdon (Ron Harper) and Peter Burke (James Naughton) make an emergency landing on what they presume to



Even assisted by Galen (McDowall, center), Virdon and Burke never did find their way home due to the show's cancellation.

be their home planet—but is actually Earth in the distant future. Apes have become the dominant species; humans are confined to their own village preserves, where they may be recruited by their ape masters as laborers and servants.

Thanks to their own carelessness, the astronauts are soon captured and brought before the apes' High Council. In contrast to the cardboardlike apes of the later Fox films, we learn that the apes are as complex in their motives as humans. Zaius (Booth Coleman), the head of the High Council, seems most concerned that the visitors from Earth's past pose a threat to his own nation; though deeply prejudiced, he is capable of reason. Urko (Mark Lenard—*Star Trek's* Sarek), the High Council's security chief, sees the humans as potentially dangerous subversives who would best be exterminated. And Galen (McDowall), though at first confused by the preposterous claims of Virdon and Burke, is eventually convinced of the truth, becoming the visitors' companion as they flee Urko and his goons, and seek out the ancient human technology that could help them to return home.

After *Apes*, McDowall's career radically shifted its course. No longer offered the A-level roles that had made his reputation through the '50s and '60s, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the genre material that started to come his way. In all of his later films, ranging from the sublime *The Legend of Hell House* to the ridiculous *Laserblast*, McDowall's contributions frequently make dreary dialogue sparkle.

Casting directors will sooner or later realize the degree to which McDowall's talent is being ignored. Meanwhile, thanks to the short-lived *Apes* series, their loss is the sci-fi fan's gain. *Planet of the Apes* airs on Sci-Fi Series Collection June 24–28, at 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. ET. American viewers please adjust for your local time zone. □

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Dear Ed,

The interview with Bruce Boxleitner was enjoyable and enlightening; I hope he enjoys John Varley's novel *Steel Beach* as much as I did! I did note a few snafus in the article. Several times the character Captain Sheridan is referred to as Commander Sheridan, most likely due to the fact that *B5's* commander during the first season was Commander Sinclair. Also, *Babylon 5* is listed as being a Fox series, when it is in fact syndicated.

Nevertheless, I am very happy to see *Babylon 5* on the cover of your magazine. The show is wonderful, yet has had to suffer through comparisons to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, despite the fact that *Babylon 5*, as a concept, was first. I myself avoided the show during its first season until a good friend sat me down for a marathon session of three episodes—I've been hooked ever since.

Keep up the good work.
Joseph V. Prisco

Dear Editor,

I am a very big sci-fi and *X-Files* fan, and a collector as well. I was hoping you can help me with information on how I might be able to acquire the Australian edition of *Rolling Stone* featuring David Duchovny and Gillian

Anderson on its cover. I know the show is so popular that it's probably impossible—just thought I'd ask.

Mike Sposetti
Campbell, Ohio

When it was first released, there were a few enterprising Australians who offered the magazine at a moderate markup through the collector's newsgroups on Usenet, but that was a while ago. We received your letter around the same time that a "scandalous" photo shoot featuring Gillian Anderson (looking just a bit uncomfortable in suits of rubber and/or lace) was published in the U.K. men's magazine FHM, coincidentally owned by Fox TV honcho Rupert Murdoch. The greatest revelation in the article, promoted as a steamy "tell-all," was about her dog, which suffers from flatulence. "It's what we've been feeding him," Anderson explained, but she never said what that was.

Dear Sci-Fi Entertainment,

Just wanted to thank you for the *Quantum Leap* marathon. It was so wonderful! We taped all 19 hours to share w/ friends and to see over and over again. Having Scott Bakula host it was an extra special treat. Thank you!

Sincerely,
The Storer Family

Dear Sci-Fi,

Regarding Steve Bonario's essay *The X-Files: A Midlife Crisis*, while I have yet to hear any real grumbling from fans, I suspect we are about to see the beginning of a media backlash toward the show, and that by the end of the third season an *X-Files* "bash"-wagon will be in full swing.

But I don't think this has anything to do with the show at all. Unfortunately, we humans seem to have a need to place the people and the things we admire onto pedestals, and this is second only to our need to chop down those same pedestals with malicious glee.

This is unfortunate, particularly as *The X-Files* seemed quite ready to maintain its



tone and quality without being thrust into the spotlight, to be adopted as the current media darling. And now the scrutiny (mutiny?) begins. Too bad, because, while the show gets dissected under the microscope, the bigger picture will be ignored; that, even in its weaker moments, *The X-Files* remains one of the best shows on TV.

Lorene Thomas
Hamilton, Ontario

Dear Editor,

Thanks for the article on *Max Headroom's* Matt Frewer. The article mentioned that Frewer is good at both comedy and drama—that is certainly confirmed by his work in *Max*. Frewer got to be as outrageous as he wanted in the *Max* role, while as Edison Carter, he was able to be more dramatic. And he was brilliant as both. Watching the show on the Sci-Fi Channel, I keep wishing that Frewer could get a chance at both those roles again, even if only for a one-shot TV movie. The way the program was dropped by ABC, quickly and unceremoniously, I never felt there was a sense of completion for that series.

Everything gets revived these days. It would be great if it could return for just one more adventure with *Max*, Edison, Theora, and the whole gang. It's been too long in the desert of bad TV for this *Max* fan—I want my oasis back!

Tammy Smith
Lakeside, CA

As much as we'd like to take credit, we at the magazine have relatively little influence on the Channel's programming policies.

Dear Sci-Fi Entertainment,

Could you give me the E-mail address for the Sci-Fi Channel, please, so I can write them directly? I know they can be accessed at <http://www.scifi.com>, but I have access only to E-mail on the Internet, not all of the other stuff, like *Dominion*. Would that work for E-mail? (I'm new at this). Thank you very much.

Charlotte Nelson

They'll be happy to hear from you at program@www.scifi.com

We errantly demoted Captain Sheridan in our story last issue on B-5. Sorry Bruce.

We often cannot reply to our mail personally, but by all means write to Sci-Fi Entertainment, 441 Carlisle Drive, Herndon, VA 22070. E-mail has a better chance of receiving a reply; reach us at 75663.2701@compuserve.com. Be sure to visit the *Dominion* at <http://www.scifi.com>.



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